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**The Hindu-Muslim Problem  
in India**



# **The Hindu-Muslim Problem in India**

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**CLIFFORD MANSHARDT**

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## PREFACE

THIS little book is an attempt to analyse some of the causes of Hindu-Muslim tension in India. The author realizes that, as an outsider, he is treading upon dangerous ground, but because he has devoted the last nine years to a practical attempt to bring about communal unity in a crowded section of the city of Bombay, he gathers sufficient courage to record some of his thoughts and observations. It is his hope that this pioneer study may be the forerunner of other studies which will really carry this problem along the way to solution.

C. M.

THE NAGPADA NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE,  
BYCULLIA, BOMBAY

*September 1, 1935*





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# THE HINDU-MUSLIM PROBLEM IN INDIA

## CHAPTER ONE

### HINDU SOCIETY BEFORE THE MUSLIM INVASION

THE history of India can almost be written in terms of a series of invasions, extending from the obscurity of prehistoric times to the last and well-known invasion of the British. Who the earliest inhabitants of the country were we do not know. Where the first invaders came from we do not know. Orthodox history has generally pictured the Aryan invaders as a fair-skinned people, pressing down through the north-west passes into India at some remote period in the past and finding there an established population known as Dravidians—a black and broad-nosed people, with a civilization and culture of its own. Where the Dravidians came from is unknown. Unknown also are the details of their lives and thought. The robust Aryans were apparently too self-satisfied to make any attempt to *enter into the life of the country as they found it.*

Of late, however, new light has been thrown upon the early civilization of India by the excavations carried out at Mohenjo-daro in Sind. Sir John Marshall tells us that the diggings undertaken there under his direction appear to reveal an established civilization in India at a time considerably anterior to the Aryan invasion. The Aryan invaders are said to have entered

India somewhere about 2000 B.C. Sir John Marshall dates certain excavated bits around 3250 B.C., with certainly an essential long antecedent history. •

Of the pre-Indo-Aryan religion we know little. The Mohenjo-daro excavations have revealed various images of worship, but there is probably considerable truth in Sir John Marshall's statement that "these fragments give us a glimpse only of the popular, devotional, and superstitious side of this religion. Of its other and more rational side; of esoteric ideas and philosophical concepts that may have been fundamental to it, as to later Hinduism, they have nothing to tell us. That is the misfortune of our possessing no documentary material that can be deciphered. Yet that there must have been such another side to this religion can hardly be doubted, unless we are to believe that a people, capable of evolving this high complex and advanced civilization, were yet incapable of progressing beyond the primitive, animistic beliefs with which the pre-Aryans have hitherto been credited; or that, while they are superior to the Vedic Aryans in all that concerned material culture, they were yet hopelessly behind them in the ordinary processes of abstract thought."<sup>1</sup>

The Indo-Aryans, as we learn from the Vedas, were a simple, primitive people—farmers and soldiers. As farmers they were naturally interested in sunshine and rain, in securing food for themselves and for their cattle. They drank liquor and ate beef. They quarrelled with a will. Family ties were strong and their women had considerable freedom. Our knowledge of their

<sup>1</sup> *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilisation*, vol. i, p. vii.

religious practices is obtained from the collection of hymns known as the Rig-Veda.

The gods to whom praises were offered were nature deities, divided into three groups with eleven gods in each group, representing the celestial regions, the atmosphere, and the earth. The gods were propitiated with so-called sacrifices—milk, ghee, grain, or other portions of the daily food which might be regarded as pleasing.

At that period there were neither temples nor images. There were priests, Brahmins, who were believed to exercise considerable power over the gods. There were also two other divisions of society—the warriors and the agriculturist. The groupings at this early period were not the rigid demarcations of caste, with the possible exception of the priests, who even thus early were making considerable claims for themselves. But *the essence of caste was at hand*.

With the extension of the Indo-Aryan conquest, more and more of the aboriginal tribes were brought under subjection. Colour prejudice appears to have been just as strong then as to-day. In order to protect themselves from the black aborigines and to preserve their purity of stock, the Aryans set up the colour-bar—the barrier of untouchability which even to this day weighs heavily upon the neck of Hinduism.

At the same time the priests came to be more and more powerful. While in the times of the Rig-Veda the worshipper sought to *persuade* the gods and to win certain favours from them, the feeling was now growing up that by a proper exercise of the sacrificial ritual the gods might be *compelled* to do men's bidding. As a

result the position of the priests became increasingly exalted, and in the religious literature known as the *Brahmanas* there are intricate instructions for priestly guidance.

Increased priestly power was accompanied by increased priestly wealth, and increased wealth by still more power, until the Brahmanas were actually spoken of as "gods upon earth," and certainly were feared more than the gods of the heavens.

But underneath this structure of priestly arrogance there was a popular religion of animism, demon worship, ancestor worship, and a crude necromancy which must have been influenced in part at least by the beliefs of the aborigines—who though conquered and assigned to an inferior status, continued to live side by side with the conquerors. New gods and godlings steadily found their way into the pantheon.

On the other hand, men of intelligence were groping for something better, and serious questionings arose concerning man's life and destiny. The religion of the Vedas was a healthy hopefulness. But as the Aryans became more Hinduized—as they came to assimilate the ideas of the aborigines—this hopefulness gave way to a feeling of despair and hopelessness, which found its expression in the doctrine known as transmigration and its accompaniment *karma*.

According to the theory of transmigration, a man's soul is a divine emanation, which at the time of his death passes into another man, an animal, or even a god. This process is repeated continuously until the soul ultimately obtains release and returns to its divine origin. Since each re-birth is determined by the law

of *karma* in accordance with a man's previous works, whether good or bad, release can only come through a cessation of action: through the annihilation of the self and through the intuitive identification of the human soul with the world-soul.

Regarding the world-soul, Farquhar says,<sup>1</sup> "The ordinary name for the world-soul was *Brahman*, a neuter noun which expresses the common thought of the time, that the world-soul is an impersonal essence present in all things. There were many speculations as to its nature; until some wise thinker called *Brahman* the *atman*, or self of the universe. Then, as the soul of the universe was *atman*, and the soul of the individual was *atman*, the conclusion was soon drawn that the two were identical. . . . The great phrases used are, 'Thou art That,' 'I am *Brahman*,' and 'I am He.' This is the Vedanta philosophy in its earliest form."

Needless to say, no single philosophy of release was accepted by all. Numerous philosophers set forth their ideas and each school of thought had its own following. The speculations regarding transmigration and *karma* have had an influence in the religious realm fully as great as that of the caste system in the social realm.

Two early salvation sects of more than uncommon importance were Jainism and Buddhism, founded by Mahavira and Gautama respectively. In a sense both of these movements were revolutionary in character—protests against the arrogance and domination of the Brahman priests. Release was said to come through self-effort, without the intervention of either priests or gods. Both Jainism and Buddhism were in opposition

<sup>1</sup> *A Primer of Hinduism*, p. 41.



to caste, proclaiming the spiritual equality of those who believed. But despite the temporary popularity of the new religions the Hinduism of the priests pursued its steady course, until at length Buddhism practically disappeared from the land and Jainism was restricted to a very narrow sphere of influence.

Although many theories have been advanced to explain the origin of caste, no single theory is satisfactory. Certainly colour entered into it, while there is also something to be said for the "occupation" theory, as well as for various others. The one thing that stands out pre-eminently in the caste system is the superior position assigned to the Brahman priest. The Laws of Manu—a scholastic compilation of social and religious practices which was compiled while the heresy of Buddhism was making its threat—are generally interpreted to the effect that caste owes its origin to Brahma, the Creator. From his mouth was born the priestly Brahman; from his shoulders, the war-like Kshatriya; from his thighs, the trader and agriculturist—the Vaisya; and from his feet, the lowly Sudra. All other castes are supposed to have developed from these primary four. It is now held, however, that the theory of four original castes is a fiction and that from a very early date Hindu society has been divided into castes and sub-castes. For our purposes it is sufficient to note here the most apparent weakening influences of caste, viz. that consigning of a large section of the population to a permanent status of inferiority, which served in numerous instances as the seed of discontent which later helped to swell the Muslim harvest; and that fragmentation of society into groups, often hostile

to one another, which has always been the enemy of national solidarity.

The two most popular gods in the Hindu pantheon are Vishnu and Siva. In the Rig-Veda, Vishnu was a minor god associated with Indra, but with the passing of time his importance increased until he even came to surpass Indra. The reason for this growth in popularity was that he was regarded as having the ability to incarnate himself in human form, thus becoming very real to a large section of the people.

Siva, on the other hand, had no incarnations, but he had his wives or consorts, who were worshipped along with, or independently of, him. He was regarded as destructive, as the bringer of pestilence and horrors. He was also regarded as representing the power of reproduction, so that in every Siva temple one sees the linga, or human phallus, and Nadi the bull, the symbol of passion. It is quite probable that the cult of the phallus and the accompanying worship of Siva found their way into Hinduism through contact with the beliefs of the aborigines, which seem to have been combined with Vedic conceptions associated with Rudra, the storm god.

About the fourth century A.D. an attempt was made to unite Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva into a Trinity, but the attempt failed because Brahma was too abstract for the common mind, and Vishnu and Siva each had their own set of followers.

The most popular manifestations of Vishnu were, and continue to be, Rama and Krishna, the heroes of the Ramayana and Mahabharata respectively. Within the Mahabharata is the scripture known as the

Bhavagadgita or "Song of the Blessed One." The Bhagavadgita is an able attempt to reverence Krishna and to rescue religion from sterility and to bring it into touch with life. It is an appeal to Hindus to be loyal to their duties as family members and members of a caste. It was through the Bhagavadgita that *bhakti*, the religion of devotion or strong feeling, came to have an acknowledged place in Hindu thought.

We have already noted how as the Aryans advanced into India their Vedic faith was influenced by their contacts with the aborigines. As the passing of time changed the Aryan invaders into Indo-Aryans, it also influenced their religious beliefs by introducing various animistic elements which were a common part of the popular worship. As Dr. Macnicol points out, "No doubt those dwellers in the mountains and the forests who were dangerous enemies of the Aryans in ancient times became associated with the dark powers that they chiefly worshipped, with whose ways they were familiar and whom they could invoke. It is accordingly this side of Hinduism that is so powerfully reinforced by the contribution of the Dravidian and other aboriginal races. Shadowy and dangerous beings, bhutas, pisachas, vetalas, ghouls, disease devils, earth-mothers, came in like a flood, ousting to a large extent the greater and worthier gods."<sup>1</sup>

Hence it is that we find in Hinduism the highest reaches of abstract philosophy and the grosser forms of demonology. The glory of Hinduism, according to its apologists, is just this comprehensiveness.

When the Muslims first entered India, what did they

<sup>1</sup> *The Living Religions of the Indian People*, p. 50.

find? They found temples. In the larger centres massive rock structures with elaborate carvings. In the smaller centres simply a dark cell, but the honoured home of the god. The earlier Brahmanical sacrifices were almost obsolete. A new ritual was in force and animals often slain and their blood offered to the gods. Music and processions were common accompaniments of worship.

They found the patriarchal family with the father occupying the position of importance and sons eagerly desired. They found the practice of child marriage, and the joint family system, whereby each son brought his new wife into the house of his father and where several generations lived together as a family unit.

If the Muslim invader had asked the question, "Who is a Hindu?" he would probably have been told that a man is born a Hindu. He is a Hindu by virtue of having been born within his caste. Should the Muslim in a moment of friendliness have invited his new Hindu friend to dine with him, he would have been told that the laws of caste stringently regulate a man's food, marriage, and even residence and occupation. The individual is not free to do as he chooses, his life is intimately bound up with that of his caste group. The only person the Hindu friend could really have lived on intimate terms with would have been one of his fellow caste men.

Had the Muslim next asked, "What do the Hindus believe?" the probable answer would have been, "Anything. Hinduism has no theological tenets to which a man must profess allegiance. Though Hinduism has many gods and many sacred books, a man

may remain a Hindu without professing belief in any god or book." On the other hand, if the Hindu had been an orthodox upper caste man, he would probably have explained the prescribed form of worship and ritual and might have added that "belief" for the orthodox Hindu means belief in the Vedas, the Brahmins, and caste. Though he might not have been able to express it, he might well have also emphasized the sacredness of the customary, which was really the preserving influence in Hindu society. If the man interrogated had been an ordinary type of man, he would probably have had an extremely hazy idea of what he really did profess to believe.

Had the Muslim perchance run across a Hindu villager somewhat isolated from the broader currents of thought, he would have found this man's worship centring about the local village god, generally a god more feared than loved. The symbol of this god might have been an image or simply an unshaped stone. Since the village god was supposed to bring plague, or other sickness, and general calamities, its worship generally consisted in means of propitiation—very often animal sacrifices. Had the Hindu been extremely ignorant he would have been very reluctant to talk at all, because of his fear of evil spirits, ghosts, and demons.

The Muslim would have heard little of philosophic Hinduism, for philosophic Hinduism was and is the religion of the few. However, it is quite probable that his informant would have had at least vague ideas of the supreme Reality, transmigration, and *karma*—particularly if he had happened to come under Brah-

man influence. Though the Muslim might have been told that the various images which he saw in the temples were simply varying aspects of the One, the ordinary villager would have professed little if any knowledge of Brahman. His concern was in learning to control and use his local deity.

Turning from religion to the political and cultural aspects of Hindu society, we find that by the sixth century B.C. India was divided into a considerable number of states, among whom there was little if any unity. Though much has been written about the early history of India, an actual dated history of the land does not begin until the seventh century B.C., and the first exact date recorded is the year of Alexander the Great's invasion—326 B.C. The rise of the Maurya dynasty in 322 B.C. is really the beginning of any authentic connected Indian history. Chandragupta's empire covered a vast area and on his death was handed on to his son and later to his grandson, Asoka. The organization of the State is said by some to have been even better than that of the later Mogul Empire under Akbar.

The Emperor Asoka was an able ruler, but is most famed for his loyalty to the tenets of Buddhism and his efforts to propagate that religion. Asoka made no attempt to destroy Hinduism or Jainism, but through the example of his own life and through his famous rock sermons he rendered a service to Buddhism comparable to that later rendered to early Christianity by the Emperor Constantine.

Asoka's moral ideals may be summarized as loyalty to parents, almsgiving, refraining from animal slaughter

kindness to slaves and servants, tolerance, truthfulness, and purity.

Asoka was a patron of the arts, the art of sculpture being particularly prominent during his period. Although the existing specimens show a Persian and Hellenistic influence, yet their dominant note is Indian, and the quality of the work is quite comparable to any similar work in other countries of the ancient world.

The successors of Asoka were not men of sufficient strength to hold the empire together. Its disintegration set in, and it was not until two hundred and fifty years later that another worthy empire-builder appeared upon the scene—Kanishka the Kushan. Following Kanishka came another period of decline of about two centuries, until the Gupta Empire was born c. A.D. 320.

Under the Guptas intellectual and artistic pursuits flourished, so much so that this has been called the "Golden Age of Indian History." The poet Kalidasa, immortal in India, was a product of this period. Science and the fine arts also flourished. Two of the finest Ajunta caves are assigned to this time.

Following the Guptas came another period of disintegration. India was now a mass of Hindu states, between which there was little, if any, unity. Periods of peace alternated with internal revolutions and wars between the states. Since there was no paramount power, the prevailing rule was almost wholly personal and despotic. And then, in the eighth century, came the Muslims, and the beginning of a new era in Indian history.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE MUSLIM INVASION OF INDIA

THE founder of Islam was the prophet Muhammad, who was born in Mecca, in Arabia, in A.D. 570. His father died before his birth and his mother when he was but a small lad. The young Muhammad was then cared for by his grandfather and his uncle, but like many other great religious leaders the early portion of his life is obscure.

At the age of twenty-five Muhammad became the business manager to the wealthy widow Khadijah, and performed his duties so satisfactorily that he won not only the business respect but also the hand of his employer.

Freed now from the necessity of stern toil, the youthful Muhammad began to ponder the problems of man and the universe, and after a period of years he became convinced that he was called upon to "arise and warn" his people. The heart of his message was that there was but one God, that idolatry was a sin, and that at a coming divine judgment the unbelievers would be punished.

The religion prevalent in Arabia at that time was a crude animism, with each tribe worshipping its own deities. Obviously, an open campaign against idolatry would not have been popular among the masses. Muhammad realized this and proceeded slowly, at first sharing his secret with his wife alone. His wife became his first convert. A few others followed, but



for the most part Mecca was not impressed with the Prophet's teaching and was even openly hostile. In A.D. 622, therefore, the Prophet left Mecca for Medina—the Hegira, which marks the year 1 A.H. in Muslim chronology.

In Medina men rallied to his support, his influence extended, until eventually Muhammad became the master of Arabia. This mastery was not achieved without force, nor did the death of the Prophet in 632 lessen the zeal of his followers. Muslim armies conquered Palestine, Syria,\* Persia, Egypt, and North Africa, and in A.D. 711 the invasion of Spain in Europe was begun.

As Lothrop Stoddard has pointed out, "This amazing success was due to a number of contributing factors, chief among them being the character of the Arab race, the nature of Mohammed's teaching, and the general state of the contemporary Eastern world. . . . For several generations before Mohammed, Arabia had been astir with exuberant vitality. The Arabs had' outgrown their ancestral paganism and were instinctively yearning for better things. Athwart this seething ferment of mind and spirit Islam rang like a trumpet-call. Mohammed, an Arab of the Arabs, was the very incarnation of the soul of his race. Preaching a simple, austere monotheism, free from priestcraft or elaborate doctrinal trappings, he tapped the well-springs of religious zeal always present in the Semitic heart. Forgetting the chronic rivalries and blood-feuds which had consumed their energies in internecine strife, and welded into a glowing unity by the fire of their new-found faith, the Arabs poured

forth from their deserts to conquer the earth for Allah, the One True God.

"Thus Islam, like the resistless breath of the sirocco, the desert wind, swept out of Arabia and encountered—a spiritual vacuum. Those neighbouring Byzantine and Persian Empires, so inspiring to the casual eye, were mere dried husks, devoid of real vitality. Their religions were a mockery and a sham. Persia's ancestral cult of Zoroaster had degenerated in 'Magism'—a pompous priestcraft, tyrannical and persecuting, hated and secretly despised. As for Eastern Christianity . . . it had become a repellent caricature of the teachings of Christ. . . . Furthermore, both the Byzantine and Persian Empires were harsh despotisms which crushed their subjects to the dust and killed out all love of country or loyalty to the State. Lastly, the two empires had just fought a terrible war from which they emerged mutually bled white and utterly exhausted.

"Such was the world compelled to face the lava-flood of Islam. The result was inevitable."<sup>1</sup>

During the life-time of the Prophet the only foundation of Islam was the Qur'an, but later three other foundations were added: Tradition, Reasoning by Analogy, and Agreement—of which the most important are considered to be the Qur'an and Tradition.

The Prophet Muhammad believed that the Qur'an had been revealed to him by God, and it is called the Word of God. The Qur'an depicts God as one and the absolute ruler of the universe. Man must submit himself to the will of God in order to attain to salvation.

<sup>1</sup> *The New World of Islam*, pp. 2-3.

The Muslim Creed contains the following articles of belief: "I believe

- "1. That there is no god but Allah ;
- "2. In His Angels ;
- "3. In His Books (Scriptures revealed to Apostles, and that the Qur'an is the last revelation) ;
- "4. In His Apostles (and that Muhammad is the last of them) ;
- "5. In the Last Day ;
- "6. In Predestination by Allah of good and evil ;
- "7. In the Resurrection."<sup>1</sup>

The private religious duties of the Muslim are five in number and are called the Pillars of Islam. The first duty is the repetition of the Creed, which in its simplified form is, "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah." The second duty is the performance of the ritual prayers five times daily. During the month of Ramadan every Muslim must observe a daylight fast for thirty days. The Muslim is required to give alms, and, if possible, to make the pilgrimage to Mecca once during his lifetime.

The Muslim invasion of India may be said to have begun in A.D. 711, when the Arabian general, Imad-ud-din Muhammad bin Qasim, led an expedition into Sind. Came next, at the close of the tenth century, the thrusts of the Amir of Ghazni. Mahmud of Ghazni, inspired by the double motive of plunder and waging a holy war against the unbelievers, led well over a dozen raids into India between 1001 and 1027. Within his own domains Mahmud was recognized as a patron

<sup>1</sup> Titus, Murray C., *Islam for Beginners*.

of scholars and poets, but the kindlier human feelings appear to have been absent in his dealings with the people of India. The immediate result of the continued raids of Mahmud was the Muslim annexation of the Punjab.

The real Muslim conquest of India began in the closing quarter of the twelfth century, when Muhammad Ghori moved south from Afghanistan. Upon Muhammad's death, his viceroy in India, Kutb-ud-din, renounced his allegiance to Ghazni, and became the first sultan of Muslim India, with his headquarters at Delhi. Both Muhammad Ghori and Kutb-ud-din, like Mahmud of old, destroyed temples and idols and compelled unbelievers to pay tribute. Kutb-ud-din died, after a rule of four short years, in 1210, but his dynasty, the so-called Slave dynasty, lingered on till 1290, when Jalal-ud-din, the founder of the Khilji dynasty, came to the throne of Delhi. His reign, while short, witnessed the first Muslim invasion of the Deccan.

Jalal-ud-din was murdered by his nephew and son-in-law, Ala-ud-din, an able soldier, but a man ruthless in the treatment of his enemies. Ala-ud-din plunged into the south, and may perhaps be designated as the first Muslim ruler who thought in terms of the conquest of the whole of India. In his attitude towards the Hindus he followed the lines of his predecessors, going even farther in his economic oppression by demanding one-half of the gross produce instead of the customary one-sixth.

The Khiljis were followed by the Tughlaks, of whom the most interesting figure was the King Muhammad,

whose eccentricities, if not actual madness, resulted in the break-up of the empire. Muhammad's successor, Firoz Shah, though in many respects an enlightened ruler, both persecuted the Hindus and sought to win them to Islam. As a result of his proclamation that all Hindus accepting Islam would be exempted from the *jizyah* or poll-tax, the existing Muslim population was largely augmented. Hitherto the Brahmans had been exempted from the poll-tax, but Firoz Shah declared that since the Brahman was the key to the whole idolatrous situation, he, too, should be included, and included he was.

The weakness of the remaining Tughlak kings hastened the process of disruption which had set in under Muhammad, until the former Delhi Empire became divided up into a considerable number of states, none of which were of any great historical importance.

The year 1526 marks the birth of the Mogul Empire and the entrance of a new people upon the Indian stage. Though the Moguls were nominally Muslims, they were children of their past, ready to accord respect to all religions, and to use any religion which would further their own purposes. Babur and his son Humayun laid the foundations of the empire, but it was Akbar who brought the empire new life and strength.

The name of Akbar (1556-1605) is known to all. Succeeding to a throne of uncertain stability, Akbar in less than a quarter of a century rounded out a mighty empire, established so firmly that it remained strong and vigorous for the next one hundred and fifty years.

Akbar was called a Muslim, but he was imbued with the old Mogul spirit of *laissez-faire*. His mother was a Persian and through her a Persian influence entered into his life. From the beginning he sought the loyalty of his Hindu subjects. He married Hindu wives and allowed them to worship in their own fashion. He protected Hindu temples and refrained from religious persecutions. In fact, Akbar was so tolerant of Hindus and Hindu practices that students have wondered how he managed to escape death at the hands of an enraged Muslim orthodoxy. For a time a veritable Parliament of Religions was carried on at the Court of Akbar, where representatives of all religious faiths discussed religious problems. The emperor even endeavoured to construct a religion of his own. Certainly Akbar was the most Indian of the Muslim rulers up to that time, and probably more than any other of his predecessors recognized the political and national importance of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Akbar was followed in turn by Jehangir and Shah-jahan, who in certain respects succeeded in adding to the lustre of the empire. Then came Aurangzeb (1658-1707), a man of genuine ability, a soldier and administrator, but withal a political misfit. Abandoning the policy of *laissez-faire*, Aurangzeb sought to make his empire a Muslim empire, disregarding entirely the rights of his Hindu subjects. He ordered the destruction of temples and images, he forbade the celebration of Hindu festivals, he reimposed the *jizyah*, which had been abolished by Akbar, he replaced Hindu Government officials by Muslims—actions which, of

course, led to discontent and even open revolt among the Hindus.

The most aggressive counter-move against Aurangzeb's policy was the attempt of Shivaji, the Maratha, to organize a Hindu revolt that would end Muslim domination. Shivaji died unsubdued, leaving behind him a well-organized government and an awakened Hinduism.

The empire left by Aurangzeb to his successors was but a pale copy of the empire handed down by Akbar, and its disintegration continued. Faced on all sides by open revolt, the new rulers were unable to cope with the situation and district after district became separated from the empire. Wars of succession weakened the empire further and the invasions of foreign leaders, such as Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah, gave the finishing touches. By the middle of the eighteenth century the Delhi Empire was but a name and the drama of Muslim rule was ended.

Following this brief historical survey we are in a position to examine some of the results of early Hindu-Muslim contacts. The most obvious question which comes to mind is, "Why were a numerically small group of invaders able to conquer this country?" Perhaps, coming from a colder climate, the Muslim invaders were in a superior physical condition. Certainly, they demonstrated military superiority. But another very important element entered into the situation. While Indian society was divided and subdivided into a chaos of non-co-operating compartments, and while the land was not a single political unit, the invaders were men of a common purpose. The armies

were under discipline and the leaders knew what they wanted. They desired territory and booty and behind this desire was the impelling motive of overcoming the unbeliever. Each Muslim raid was in the nature of a holy war, and the invaders fought with fanatical zeal.

The chief object of the early Muslim conquerors was to convert the infidels or "to send them to hell with the sword." Temples were destroyed and idols desecrated in a wholesale manner. The Hindus who resisted were killed. Those who accepted Islam were welcomed into the Islamic brotherhood. Those who accepted political sovereignty only were compelled to pay the *jizyah* or poll-tax.

Conversions fell into two categories—forced and voluntary. When Muhammad bin Qasim entered Sind in A.D. 711, he circumcised Brahmans by force, and killed those who resisted. Other rulers adopted less obvious methods. As late as 1789 Tipu Sultan in Malabar "issued general orders that every being in the district without distinction should be honoured with Islam, that the houses of such as fled to avoid that honour should be burned, that they should be traced to their lurking-places, and that all means of truth and falsehood, force or fraud, should be employed to effect their universal conversion."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, voluntary conversion was widespread. Traders, as they moved hither and yon, were successful in winning adherents to their religion. Missionaries and itinerant preachers added their quota. But perhaps the most potent factor in the spread of Indian Islam was the Muslim doctrine of brotherhood,

<sup>1</sup> Sir T. W. Arnold; *The Preaching of Islam*, p. 261 f.



where by the single act of conversion a despised outcaste might rise to a position of equality with the conquerors. The Indian Muslim community of to-day is not simply descended from the Afghan, Arab, Turkish, and other invaders. It is far more the result of the great number of Hindu converts who embraced Islam and passed on this religion to their descendants.

Other influences which must be mentioned as contributing to the growth of Islam in India are the considerable immigration which took place from across the border, and the numerous unions which were contracted between Muslim men and Hindu women, although it must be said that these unions worked both ways, for while the Hindu woman became a nominal Muslim by marriage, her children were often more Hindu than Muslim.

From the very beginning the Muslim invaders showed a strong dislike for Hindu culture. Countless specimens of Hindu architecture were destroyed and Indo-Muslim edifices reared in their stead. The early Sultans who showed any interest in literature were interested in Persian rather than Sanskrit. An interesting result of the meeting of Persian and Hindi in India was the development of Urdu, which is a Persianized form of Hindi.

As has already been mentioned, the Mogul emperors were less rigid in their outlook. Thus Akbar is said to have been interested both in Indian music and art and to have encouraged a synthesis of Indian and Persian art. Similarly, the architecture of his period represents a union of both Hindu and Muslim styles. It was a part of Akbar's governmental policy to attempt

to obliterate those differences which kept Hindus and Muslims apart. Jahangir and Shahjahan were also patrons of the arts, though Shahjahan reversed the policy of Akbar and Jahangir by his refusal to allow the erection of any new Hindu temples. Aurangzeb, as a religious zealot, saw no good in anything Hindu, and denied himself of whatever pleasure he might have obtained from a cultivation of the arts.

Although in the earlier years the Muslim invaders would have no commerce with Hindus, it later became the practice for Muslim rulers to employ Hindu officials—in fact, a number of Hindus rose to positions of commanding influence. Thus in the time of Akbar two Hindus occupied the important positions of Minister of Finance and Prime Minister respectively. When Aurangzeb attempted to exclude Hindus from governmental posts he found himself in a very difficult situation.

But vigorous as was the Muslim offensive, it failed to “Islamize” India. The reason is quite apparent. The early Muslim invaders were little more than raiders. They made converts, but they had no time to impart a sound religious education. When the armies passed, the converts were left behind with a few very hazy ideas. It was but natural that these ill-instructed people should be strongly influenced by their Hindu environment and revert to many Hindu practices. Even under more settled conditions it was impossible for the Muslim rulers to maintain a vital religious contact with the outlying regions. Islam came to India. In a political sense it conquered India, but it never actually ruled the hearts of the people.

As Lord Meston has well pointed out in his *Nationhood for India*,<sup>1</sup> the ordeal of the continued Muslim invasions "was such as probably no other religion in the world but Hinduism would have survived. In many senses, however, its effect was disastrous. It put an end to all chances of internal reform and it hardened and exaggerated the purely defensive and materialistic side of Hinduism. Whether, with the final absorption of Buddhism, the time would have been ripe for shedding the archaic crust of Hinduism, it is now impossible to guess. There would seem to have been indications, in the rising cult of Vishnu, that men's minds were reaching out towards a kindlier incarnation, a loving God compassionate to human weaknesses. But all this crumbled under the direct attacks of Islam upon the whole tabernacle of the faith. Any softening of the doctrine of *Karma* was prohibited by the necessity for using the terrors of rebirth as a check on apostasy, compulsory or otherwise. And for similar reasons, in almost every direction, there was a stiffening of faith and practice. The Joint Family System, a device which in times of peace deadens individual effort and multiplies human parasites, became in troublous days an insurance against alien rapacity. The position of women deteriorated; the bonds of caste grew more rigid. On all sides Hinduism ossified in self-defence. Speculation on the eternal verities flourished, for adversity often stimulates the philosophic mind. And some of the masterpieces of Hindu literature belong to these hard centuries. But the social structure and the cardinal doctrines of the

<sup>1</sup> P. 14 f.

system were far more unbending when the British replaced the Mogul than they had been six hundred years earlier."

This early hostility of the Hindu towards the Muslim has carried over to the present day. Though the Hindu out-numbers the Muslim in practically every province of India, he still seems to fear him. Recalling the days of Muslim domination, he is unwilling to run any risks of present-day Muslim political supremacy. The Muslim, on the other hand, remembers his glorious past and looks to the future.

The period of British rule has brought about new methods of political organization and close political unification. The spread of roads and the building of railways has narrowed the boundaries of India. But though the various sections of the country have been brought closer together, there has not been a corresponding increase in the spiritual unity of the people. India has been made safe; deserts and jungles have been conquered; but the elemental passion of human hatred still remains untamed. And of what use is a vaunted material civilization apart from the civilizing of men's inner selves?

Many to-day talk glibly of inter-communal unity, but the changing of men's attitudes cannot be wrought by talk. Human nature is a stubborn thing, and ten-fold more difficult to cope with when one is dealing with uneducated masses. A mind-set having behind it the customs and prejudices of many generations cannot be changed in a moment. The pessimist who rests his case upon the formula "Human nature cannot change," is perhaps nearer to the truth than the easy

optimist. And yet, men's habits of thought and habits of action do change. The educational process is slow, but its results abide. The task of bringing about inter-communal unity is by no means a hopeless one. Once the facts are brought to light the way is clear for intelligent advance. To face facts and seek to interpret them is the problem of the succeeding chapters.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CAUSES OF HINDU-MUSLIM TENSION: SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS

OF the 353 million people living in India to-day, over 77 million are Muslims. India has thus the largest Muslim population found in any single country. One out of every four Muslims in the world belongs to India. The single province of Bengal, for example, contains more Muslims than Turkey, Arabia, and Persia together. In British India proper there are about 177 millions of Hindus and 66 millions of Muslims. While the Muslims are found in all parts of India, the majority are in Bengal and the Punjab. In the Indian States, the Hindus are in a large majority, though it is interesting to note that in Kashmir, with a Muslim majority, the ruler is a Hindu, while in the important Muslim state of Hyderabad the great majority of the population is Hindu.

Socially, as we have already indicated, the Hindus and the Muslims have unlike traditions. They have a different historical background. For a long period of time both the Hindus and Muslims had an independent history—a history of which each group was naturally proud. When their history began to overlap in India it was only to be expected that each group would interpret events through its own glasses—a process which has continued down to the present day. The Muslim still interprets history from the Muslim angle and the Hindu from the Hindu angle. Each group has

its own heroes to whom it gives devoted honour. Historical dramas, of which the Indian people are very fond, carry their distorted versions of historical events to the uneducated and prejudice their minds. Communal schools make little effort to build up an Indian *national* tradition.

Since India is a land of many languages and dialects, the language barrier does not divide Hindus and Muslims alone. It separates Hindus from Hindus and Muslims from Muslims as well. But at the same time the dissimilarity in language is a divisive influence. A Muslim or Hindu may learn a language or dialect other than his own for business purposes, but he seldom seeks to acquire sufficient proficiency to acquaint himself with the literature of that language. It is the rare Muslim who will study Sanskrit for cultural purposes, and it is the rare Hindu who will delve deeply into Persian or Arabic.

In cities with a large Hindu and a large Muslim population the two groups tend to live apart from each other. During working hours Hindus and Muslims will mingle on the streets and in the factories, but at night the Hindu returns to the Hindu locality with its temples and where he feels a "consciousness of kind," while the Muslim will return to the Muslim locality with its mosques and where Muslim customs predominate. Of course, such segregation cannot be carried out completely, but it is the general tendency. In the city of Bombay, for example, sections such as Girgaum, Bhendy Bazar, and Nagpada are recognized as communal areas. The section of Bombay in which I live is one of the most congested areas in the city, but the

Muslim workmen are unwilling to leave the region to take up residence in more favoured areas because it means separating themselves from their fellow-Muslims and depriving themselves of the sense of solidarity that comes through association with people of the same religion and customs.

Writing upon this point in the volume *Political India*,<sup>1</sup> Sir Theodore Morison says, "The Hindus and Muslims who inhabit one village, one town, or one district belong to two separate nations more distinct and spiritually farther apart than two European nations. France and Germany are to Europeans the standard example of enemy nations, and yet a young Frenchman may go to Germany for business or study, he may take up his residence with a German family, share their meals and go with them to the same place of worship. . . . No Muslim can live on such terms in a Hindu family. Sir Abdur Rahim once put this point clearly and courageously: 'Any of us Indian Muslims travelling, for instance, in Afghanistan, Persia, and Central Asia, among Chinese Muslims, Arabs, and Turks, would at once be made at home and would not find anything to which we are not accustomed. On the contrary, in India we find ourselves in all social matters total aliens when we cross the streets and enter that part of the town where our Hindu fellow-townsmen live.' "

Repugnance to inter-marriage is another cause of tension. Where members of groups of people, even with opposing interests, inter-marry freely, the strain between the groups is lessened as the common contacts multiply.

<sup>1</sup> Edited by Sir John Cumming, pp. 103-104.



But where inter-marriage is bitterly opposed by both groups, artificial and even false barriers are erected which tend to perpetuate misunderstandings and hatred. The situation is intensified by the fact that a large number of the inter-communal marriages which do take place are the result of illicit relationships, which causes such marriages to be regarded unfavourably by both groups.

A certain amount of communal tension must be attributed to ignorance. The ignorant Hindu does not understand and does not want to understand the Muslim, and the ignorant Muslim makes no effort to understand the Hindu. The unlettered of each group rest secure in their prejudices and nourish these prejudices by the most fantastic rumours. A large number of so-called political leaders exploit mass prejudices as a regular part of their stock-in-trade.

A certain section of the Press adopts the same tactics, using as its circulation appeal a narrow communalism which arouses the passions and stirs up hatred. Every incident possible is given a communal twist and minor events are exaggerated until they appear to be events of major importance. The amending of the Indian Penal Code in 1927, making it a specific offence to outrage with deliberate and malicious intent "the religious feelings of any class of His Majesty's subjects, by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations, insults, or attempts to insult religions or religious beliefs," has had a somewhat sobering effect upon the more radical editors, but the situation is still in need of considerable improvement.

The immediate occasion for the Bill of 1927 was what

was known as the *Rangila Rasul* case. Several years previous to 1927 a Hindu in the Punjab had published the pamphlet *Rangila Rasul*—"The Gay Prophet"—a grossly abusive attack upon the Prophet Muhammad. The author was prosecuted, but the case dragged on for about two years before he was finally sentenced. Appeal was made, and in the High Court of the Punjab the Hindu writer was acquitted. The editor and proprietor of a Muslim daily paper in Lahore condemned the High Court decision in such a manner that they were sentenced for contempt of court. About the same time a monthly journal published at Amritsar in the Punjab made another attack upon the Prophet. The Muslims by this time were considerably agitated, and so a prosecution was quickly ordered. In this case the accused were convicted, which had a soothing effect upon Muslim public opinion. Since, however, the provisions of Section 153a of the Indian Penal Code, under which the prosecutions were launched, were not wholly appropriate to contumelious speeches or writings against a religion or against religious sentiments, a Bill to amend the Criminal Law in this respect was introduced in the Legislative Assembly in September 1927, and passed in the form quoted in the preceding paragraph, with the results there indicated.

Communal discord is also nourished by the very human fault of generalization. During the World War the most of us who lived in allied countries built up a hatred towards "Germany." For the most of us "Germany" was a person—some sort of a fiendish ogre, devoid of any of the finer human qualities. What we

failed to realize in our hysteria was that there were many Germanys within our personalized "Germany" and that the German nation was not a single united entity.

In the same way in India there is much loose talk about "Hindus" and "Muslims"—a failure to recognize that there are Hindus of all types and descriptions and that Muslims present equally varying characteristics. If a Hindu is injured in any way by another Hindu, he will vent his wrath upon the *individual* who has injured him, but if the culprit is a Muslim, then the generalization is at once made that "*All* Muslims are rascals." The Muslims generalize in a similar fashion regarding the misdeeds of individual Hindus, and so the process continues.

Differing religious practices are perhaps the most immediate causes of communal disorders. While the Hindu reverences the cow, the Muslim practices cow-slaughter in connection with Bakr Id. This important feast, which is said to commemorate Abraham's willingness to offer up Ishmail (the Muslim's substitute for Isaac), is celebrated in connection with the *Haj* or pilgrimage ceremonies. In other Muslim countries the animal sacrificed is generally a camel or a goat, but in India it is common for a group of families to club together and buy a cow, rather than to offer up goats of their own. In every large city in India extra police precautions must be taken at the time of this festival.

A good illustration of how a trivial incident may lead to serious trouble at such a time is found in *India in 1928-29*.<sup>1</sup> The report reads: "The village of Softa is about

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 3-4.

twenty-seven miles south of Delhi, and is inhabited by Muslims. This village is surrounded by villages occupied by Hindu cultivators who, on hearing that the Muslims of Softa intended to sacrifice a cow on 'Id day, objected to the sacrifice of the particular cow selected on the ground that it had been accustomed to graze in fields belonging to the Hindu cultivators. The dispute over the matter assumed a threatening aspect and the Superintendent of Police of the district accordingly went with a small force of police, about twenty-five men in all, to try to keep peace. He took charge of the disputed cow and locked it up, but his presence did not deter the Hindu cultivators of a few neighbouring villages from collecting about a thousand people armed with pitchforks, spears, and staves, and going to Softa. The Superintendent of Police and an Indian Revenue official, who were present in the village, assured the crowd that the cow, in connection with which the dispute had arisen, would not be sacrificed, but this did not satisfy the mob, which threatened to burn the whole village if any cow was sacrificed, and also demanded that the cow should be handed over to them. The Superintendent of Police refused to agree to this demand, whereupon the crowd became violent and began to throw stones at the police and to try to get round the latter into the village. The Superintendent of Police warned the crowd to disperse, but to no effect. He therefore fired one shot from his revolver as a further warning, but the crowd still continued to advance and he had to order his party of police to fire. Only one volley was fired at first, but as this did not cause the retreat of the mob

two more volleys had to be fired before the crowd slowly dispersed, driving off some cattle belonging to the village.

"While the police were engaged in this affair a few Hindu cultivators got into Softa at another place and tried to set fire to the village. These were, however, driven away by the police after they had inflicted injuries on three or four men. In all fourteen persons were killed and thirty-three injured in this affair."

The Mohurram ceremony, commemorating the martyrdom of Hasan and Husayn, is also a time of grave anxiety. It is considered newsworthy if the Mohurram actually passes off peacefully. Thus, in a single issue of the *Times of India* (April 15, 1935), the following items appear :

"CALCUTTA, April 14. Mohurram passed off peacefully last night when several big processions were taken out, the celebrations lasting almost till dawn. . . . In the northern suburb of Calcutta, which is a mill area, trouble was threatened, but was averted by tactful handling of the situation by the police. The branch of a banyan-tree obstructed the passage of the Muslim procession, which the Muslims wanted to cut, but the Hindus of the locality objected. Displaying "great resourcefulness, the police slung a rope across the obstructing branch and pulled it off the path temporarily to allow the procession to pass."

"HYDERABAD (Deccan), April 14. The Mohurram celebrations in Hyderabad and Secunderabad passed off peacefully."

"The Mohurram passed off peacefully at Multan and Ahmedabad, adequate precautionary measures being taken by the police."

"KARACHI, April 14. The Mohurrum passed off peacefully. The biggest of the processions continued till late in the evening. The authorities took elaborate precautions and a number of processions passed through the main streets without any incident, excepting in the case of one in which a Hindu photographer while taking photographs of tazias was hit on the head, the processionists objecting to photographs being taken."

The town of Firozabad, Agra District, United Provinces was not so fortunate. An Agra dispatch, dated April 14th, reads: "A Hindu-Muslim riot occurred at Firozabad, Agra District, at 9 a.m. to-day. The police had to open fire and about thirty rounds were fired. One Muslim was killed and seven persons belonging to both the communities were injured as the result of the firing. One Hindu was killed and thirty-five persons of both communities were injured in the riot. Eleven Hindus, including three children, were also burned to death inside a house . . .

"It appears that between 8 and 9 a.m., while a Muslim procession was in progress in Firozabad town, bricks were thrown at it from roofs on the south side of the main bazaar. This caused great excitement among the processionists, some of whom left the main bazaar and began to assault passers-by in a side lane. They also set fire to the house of Dr. — and to the adjacent temple of Radhakrishna. The inmates of Dr. —'s house, who had barricaded themselves inside, perished in the flames, attempts to rescue them having proved unsuccessful.

"In the meantime, the sub-divisional officer had arrived with a party of police, and he ordered the mob

to disperse. As the order was not obeyed, a volley was fired, and one Muslim was killed and several other persons injured. »

“Sporadic rioting had by now broken out elsewhere. In two places rioters were dispersed by firing resorted to by the police, whose warnings had gone unheeded.”

And from RANCHI: “It is reported that while handling a lathi (stick), a Muslim boy accidentally hit a Hindu, and the Hindus then threw brick-bats at Muslim processionists, resulting in a clash. Prompt police action controlled the situation. Stray assaults are rampant.”

The Hindu makes much use of music in his religious rites. It is almost impossible to picture a Hindu religious procession without musical accompaniment of some kind. It may be a band, or it may be group or individual singing, but music there is. The Muslim, on the other hand, is specifically enjoined against the use of music in worship. When a Hindu procession playing music passes a mosque in which Muslims are engaged in prayer, there is almost certain to be trouble. Periodically one may pick up the daily paper and read an item such as the following:

“KARACHI, July 8. Six persons were injured as a result of a Hindu-Muslim fracas in the heart of the city yesterday.

“It is alleged that the trouble originated in an Arya Samaj procession playing music in front of a mosque on the Outram Road, near Lambert Market, at prayer-time.

“Three Muslims, it is stated, then came out of the mosque and asked that the music should cease. However, the music was not stopped immediately but ceased a hundred yards farther on.

"Meanwhile, it is reported, one Muslim attacked an Arya Samaj volunteer with a knife, whereupon the volunteer's companion struck the Muslim assailant with a lathi.

"A mêlée ensued resulting in injuries to six persons, mostly Hindus. The police hastened to the scene and brought the situation under control.

"Police pickets are patrolling the affected area."<sup>1</sup>

Since the Muslim and Hindu calendars do not follow the same system of reckoning it sometimes happens that Hindu and Muslim ceremonial occasions fall upon the same date. Such a coincidence is always an occasion for anxiety, particularly if one group is observing a day of mourning and the other a festival of rejoicing. In the same issue of the *Times of India* from which I quoted the reports regarding the Mohurram ceremonies,<sup>2</sup> I also find the following items:

"HAZARIBAGH, April 13. Six Hindus, including a sub-inspector of police, have been admitted into hospital suffering from injuries stated to have been received in the course of a communal riot yesterday on the occasion of Ramnavami. It is reported that local Hindus took out a procession carrying flags inscribed with the emblem of Mahabir. Muslims objected to this on the ground that they would have to parade the streets of the town with *paika* in celebration of Mohurram and this would be contaminated by the touch of the flags. Local authorities, however, directed that no *paika* should be formed until evening, when the Hindu procession would have concluded.

"In the clash that followed brick-bats and lathis

<sup>1</sup> *Times of India*, July 10, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> April 15, 1935.



were freely used. . . . The situation is now under control."

"NAsik, April 14. The Ekadeshi day passed off peacefully here, no untoward incidents being reported till the time of wiring. Excellent police arrangements were made in the Panthayathi area, where the Kalaram Temple is situated, the locality presenting the appearance of an armed camp. . . .

"The tazia processions were regulated by the police and tazias were immersed in the river farther downstream from the sacred 'kunds.' "

Other causes of communal clash are purely trivial. Thus I read in this evening's paper (*The Evening News*, June 4, 1935) a dispatch from Vellore: "News is to hand from Ambur of a riot having taken place there on Friday night between the Muslims and the Hindus following a wrestling match between a local Muslim and a Punjabi Hindu. . . . During the fight that ensued forty persons are said to have been injured."

And in the *Times* of May 27, 1935: "NAsik, May 26. Loud soda-water bottle explosions threw the residents on the river-bank into panic at midnight, while slumberers on the main road were aroused by tongas rushing excited Muslims to the river-bank to rescue their co-religionists . . . from the clutches of Hindu assaulters. . . .

"It is understood that the rivalry which existed between the injured Muslim youths and the Hindus over a Hindu woman came to a head at midnight when the former were sitting in the latter's restaurant on the river-bank. From words they came to blows. The Hindus proved to be the stronger party. Immediately

word reached the Muslim quarters, and the Muslims hurried to the place in tongas and motor-cars. . . .

"A *posse* of police rushed to the scene and succeeded in . . . restoring calm."

In order to discover the beliefs and prejudices of the man in the street in regard to the communal problem, I have over a long period of time been interviewing working-class Hindus and Muslims regarding their conception of the causes of communal conflict. The following answers are typical:

1. "We Muslims dislike Hindus because the Hindus are idol worshippers. Muslims believe in but one God."

2. "We shall always have to fight the Hindus, for our religion says that we must fight those who believe in idols."

3. "We [the Muslims] are a God-chosen race. The Hindus are God-condemned."

4. "The Muslims are foreigners in our country. They should be driven out of *Hindustan* to their former homes."

5. "We Muslims believe that we must eat cows in order that we may become strong and brave."

6. "We Hindus worship the cow. The Muslim kills the cow."

7. "We [Muslims] sometimes kill the cow just to annoy the Hindus and to make fun."

8. "We Muslims kill the cow at Bakr Id because it is cheaper than to kill a goat. A man must by himself offer up a goat, but several men can go together and sacrifice a cow. You can kill a goat at home, but it is better to kill the cow in the street, and this makes the Hindus angry."

9. "Muslims pray in silence. The Hindus bother our prayers with their music."

10. "There are more Hindus than Muslims in India. Why should we not rule?" (Hindu)

11. "The Hindus are trying to keep us down. We Muslims are a spirited people and resent this."

12. "A Muslim cannot be trusted. Muslims try to steal and seduce our women." (Hindu)

13. "Hindus are sly and untrustworthy. Muslims are straightforward and honest." (Muslim)

14. "All good Muslims believe that if they die in the cause of their religion they will go to heaven. The man who kills a *Kaffir* becomes a *Ghazi*. (Muslim)

15. "Among certain classes of both Hindus and Muslims the communal murderer is held in respect. He is held up before boys and young men of the community as a worthy example." (Reported by both Hindus and Muslims)

16. "Our religious leaders are generally uneducated and prejudiced. They stir up trouble." (Reported by both Hindus and Muslims)

17. "There is communal trouble because so many of our people are illiterate." (Reported by both Hindus and Muslims)

18. "Most of our communal trouble starts with rumours." (Reported by both Hindus and Muslims)

19. "Both Hindu and Muslim journals misrepresent facts and encourage discord." (Reported by both Hindus and Muslims)

20. "Our schools teach history from a communal angle, thereby prejudicing the minds of the young." (Reported by both Hindus and Muslims)

21. "Government fosters the policy of 'divide and rule.' " (Reported by both Hindus and Muslims)

In the capacity of a reporter of what people actually claim to believe, it is not my function here either to support or to attack these statements, but the fact that these views are prevalent, and I would say widely prevalent, among working-class people is clear indication of the complexity of the communal problem. Given large groups of illiterate people, controlled by their prejudices, nourished by rumour, and swayed by their emotions, and the spark is ever at hand for serious conflagrations.

Within both Hinduism and Islam there are important groups and movements for the furtherance of communal interests which, to say the least, do not make for inter-communal unity. The beginning of the second quarter of the nineteenth century marked the beginning of an awakening in Hinduism under the influence of the Brahmo Samaj. But in the last quarter of the century there was a reaction against the liberalizing movement and definite attempts were made to defend the ancient faith. The most important of these movements was the Arya Samaj, emphasizing a return to the Vedas and directing a counter-attack against the challenge of Christianity and Islam. The Arya Samaj is still operating as a missionary organization, seeking to restore Muslim and Christian converts to the Hindu fold.

The Hindu Maha Sabha is the most active missionary society of orthodox Hinduism. It is an aggressive organization which aims at closing up the ranks of

Hinduism in order to present a united front against its rivals—particularly Islam. It fosters the *shuddhi*, or purification movement, for the reclamation of Hindus converted to Christianity or Islam or for those whose ancestors were Hindus. It is a difficult matter to interpret the motives of men, but in many cases the motive behind the *shuddhi* movement appears to be an attempt to increase the numerical strength of Hinduism rather than its moral strength.

Addressing a meeting in Bombay in November 1933 on the subject, "The Message of the Hindu Mahasabha, Namely, Hindu Sangathan," Bhai Parmanand is reported to have said, "That assuming the Hindus wanted freedom, or independence for India, they had to see that Hindus also lived in this country as a great people, a great nation. . . . The Congress idea of Hindu-Muslim unity was an imaginary scheme. . . . It had been stated that Indians could achieve Swaraj through Hindu-Muslim unity. That proclamation was the cause of their [the Hindus'] weakness. The English took up the same line and made an alliance with the Muslims. There was no chance of the two communities uniting at present. . . . The only way was for the Hindus to unite, to grow strong and develop the will to live in India."<sup>1</sup>

The activity of the Maha Sabha is met by counter-Muslim activity. Thus there is the Central Khilafat Organization with headquarters in Bombay. Organized originally to protect the interests of Turkey and the Caliphate, it became upon the abolition of the Turkish Caliphate in 1924 the outstanding organization looking

<sup>1</sup> *Times of India*, November 7, 1933.

towards Muslim unity (*tanzim*), and as aggressive in its way as the Hindu Maha Sabha.

The Central Jam'iyat-i-Tabligh-ul-Islam (Society for the Propagation of Islam), a national organization working from Ambala in the Punjab, has as one of its chief aims the opposing of the *Shuddhi* activities of the Arya Samaj.

The situation is comparable on a small scale to the race for armaments between the Western nations, and the resulting atmosphere is one of fear and suspicion.

A healthy communalism is perfectly right and proper. A man should be proud of his social heritage. He should have a love for his religion. He should seek to cultivate all that is best in his culture and tradition. But when pride of one's own community leads one to a hatred of other communities, communalism changes from a blessing into a curse.

It would be entirely wrong to convey the impression that communal conflict is always upon the surface of Indian life. It is not. All over India, Hindus and Muslims are living together in a peaceful fashion. But it is a fact that potential communal conflict lies just beneath the surface and it takes very little scratching to bring it to light. Social and religious factors have uncovered their full quota of strife, but they are not alone in the field. The more recent and most potent disturbing elements are economic and political.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CAUSES OF HINDU-MUSLIM TENSION: ECONOMIC

SINCE India is predominantly an agricultural country, one of the most important of Indian problems is the land problem. From early days in India the ruler of the country has been regarded as entitled to a fair share in the produce of the land, and at the present time the revenue derived from the land is the largest single financial item.

"The system of land tenure in India exhibits almost every conceivable variation, from immense estates, containing thousands of tenants, to minute peasant-holdings of well under an acre in size. It is, nevertheless, possible to classify the holdings into certain fairly well-defined groups. When the revenue is assessed by the State on an individual or community owning considerable landed property, and occupying a position analogous to that of a landlord, the tenure is known as *zamindari* or 'village community'; and when it is assessed on individuals who are the actual occupants, or are accepted as representing the occupants, of smaller holdings, the tenure is known as *ryotwari*. Under either system there may be rent-paying sub-tenants."<sup>1</sup>

*India in 1925-26*<sup>2</sup> reports that broadly speaking, in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the Central Provinces, and the United Provinces, "the agriculturist is a tenant

<sup>1</sup> *India in 1930-31*, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> P. 152.

holding his land by one form of tenure or another from a landlord." The Punjab, Bombay, and Madras are regarded as ryotwari provinces.

In the days of the Moguls all land was considered as belonging to the State, but certain plots of land were granted to *mamlatdars*, as the *zamindars* were then called, with the proviso that the State could resume the land at will or transfer it to another. However, as a matter of actual practice, the incumbent was seldom disturbed in his tenure and the right to the land came to be regarded as hereditary. When the East India Company assumed control, it was found that a disturbing of these ancient rights might lead to serious trouble and hence to a large extent the hereditary holders were confirmed in their holdings. This meant that the *zamindars* were also able to sell the land or mortgage it.

With the passing of time, more and more of this land has passed out of the hands of its hereditary owners into the hands of non-cultivators, who far too often take little or no interest in the improvement of the land, and whose interest is in profits rather than in the well-being of the actual cultivators. Speaking of the Punjab, Mr. M. L. Darling says,<sup>1</sup> "The landlord is too often a parasite, living on his tenants, wasting his substance and corrupting his neighbourhood. . . . Of those [landlords] in one tahsil the late Settlement Officer wrote: 'They neither develop their lands themselves nor permit others to develop them, and their only conception of patriotism is an occasional outburst of religious intolerance.'"

<sup>1</sup> *Rusticus Loquitur*, p. 332.



This state of affairs is, of course, not peculiar to India. The agrarian problem is world-wide, but it is very acute in India. The dissatisfaction of the peasants with their condition is a growing one and bids to become even more troublesome in the future.

The situation has its bearing upon the communal problem where the landlord, who is looked upon as the oppressor, happens to be a Hindu, while his tenants are Muslim, or *vice versa*. There is scarcely a grave communal disturbance in the rural areas in which the thread of economic oppression cannot be distinguished in the tangled skein of causes.

The problem of Indian poverty is known to all. In practically every village in India men, women, and children are living near to the subsistence level. The volume *India in 1930-31*<sup>1</sup> describes the condition of the agriculturist very clearly: "The condition of the agricultural labourers who do not hold land themselves, and whose wages are usually not paid in cash but in kind, is probably the most unfortunate of all, and their total number throughout the country must amount to many millions, despite the fact that India is justly considered to be essentially a land of peasant-holdings. Such of them as happen to live in the neighbourhood of towns can sometimes help themselves during the slack periods in agricultural operations by labouring for town wages, but this resource . . . is never open to more than a small proportion of them. The landholders, even those who hold small fragmented plots, are generally held to be in a better position than the labourers, because they, at least, have something on

<sup>1</sup> P. 157 f.

which they can raise credit; but this is often their undoing, for if they are not already encumbered by debts inherited from their fathers, their need for cash in times of stringency, or on the occasion of religious or social festivals, puts them in the hands of the money-lender, and years may elapse before the loan can be repaid. However prudent and thrifty the Indian small-holder may be, he has as a rule the utmost difficulty in keeping out of debt, since the resources on which he can fall back are so meagre; and even at the best of times he has to wait several months for a return for his labour and expenditure. It should, of course, be borne in mind that in most agricultural countries farmers have recourse to banks, or other money-lending organizations, for credit to finance their cultivation, and that the proportion of men who can themselves provide the cash for raising their crops over a number of years is usually small. It might, indeed, be argued that it is economically undesirable that any farmer should own all his working capital. But among the rural population of India personal debts and loans for cultivation are inextricably mixed, and the arrangements for financing agricultural operations are very badly organized. Moreover, if the cultivator borrows from the money-lender instead of from some other source such as one of the co-operative banks, the rate of interest charged him on his loan is often so high as to cripple his activities for many years to come."

Thus it is that the money-lender is one of the most essential and at the same time one of the most hated men in India. And here, again, by a species of general-

ization, the money-lender is designated as "Hindu" or "Muslim," as the case may be, and talked about as the Hindu or Muslim oppressor. A leaflet has recently come into my hands issued by the Ahmadiyya Anjuman-i-isha'at-i-Islam of Lahore. In this leaflet, the writer, who is of course a Muslim, declares that "Poverty has become the badge of a Musalman. There is hardly one who does not owe some amount or other to the Hindu money-lender. Day by day the immovable property of the Musalmans is passing into the hands of the Hindus, and whatever they earn by the sweat of their brow goes in some shape or other to strengthen the other community. . . . Muslim Punjab alone owes a debt of about Rs. 15,00,000,000, on which they pay to the *Banya* (Hindu money-lender) an annual interest of Rs. 2,50,000,000, full one-half of their total annual earnings of Rs. 50,000,000. One half thus finds its way into the pockets of others as interest. . . . It comes to this, then, that whatever we earn belongs to others. Or, to put it in other words, our position in this country is that of slaves; for what else is a slave but one who labours for others?"

At the same time, Mr. Darling points out<sup>1</sup> that money-lending in the Punjab is by no means confined to Hindus. Though Muhammad forbade the taking of usury, it is certainly not uncommon for Muslims to act as money-lenders. Those who have scruples against taking interest in cash do not hesitate to extort a full quota in service or kind. "The simplest way to take it in kind is to secure land in mortgage with possession, and this is freely done. If it is taken in service, the

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p. 185 f.

debtor is required to cut his creditor's fodder, milk his cattle, help to cut his crops, and sometimes even to plough his land. Such services are paid for at low rates or are given free. Other money-lenders, a little more scrupulous, differentiate between Hindu and Muhammadan, and take interest from the former but not from the latter. South of the Sutlej, where the Muhammadan peasant is generally a convert from Hinduism, cash is freely taken. . . . Even in the western Punjab, where Muhammadanism is at its strongest and where most still think it a sin to lend at interest, the Muhammadan landowner who lends money contrives, when he pleases, to get his interest in some roundabout way; and one of them in Mianwali when taken to task asked whether he was not doing his co-religionists a service in lending at 18½ per cent . . . when the Hindu money-lender charged double the amount. In town and townlet the Muhammadan Khoja, also a convert from Hinduism, is notorious for his hard bargains, and recent inquiries suggest that there are as many as 1,000 Muhammadan agriculturists who take interest at anything from 15 to 50 per cent. In the central Punjab, says a Muhammadan Sub-Judge, their number is increasing fast, and there is little to choose between their methods and those of either Sikh or bania."

I shall discuss the Bombay Riots of 1929 in another chapter, but I well remember the feeling aroused against the Pathans (Muslims from the north-west frontier) in the mill area of the city by Hindu agitators going into the chawls and reminding the workers—though they needed no reminding—that the situation

presented an excellent opportunity to take revenge upon the Pathan money-lenders. The official *Report of the Bombay Riots Inquiry Committee, 1929*,<sup>1</sup> states that in the opinion of the Committee the immediate causes of the riots "were the attacks made on Pathans, as a result of the rumour that Pathans were kidnapping children, and because the Pathans had taken the places of some of the Oil Installation strikers. The opportunity was also taken to attack the rooms of the Pathan money-lenders in the locality, to murder them, plunder their dwellings, and in one case destroy their documents." And again, on page 14, "We are of opinion, as indicated above, that the attacks by the strikers and mill-hands were due primarily to the fact that the Pathans had taken the place of strikers at the Oil Installations, and, secondly, and to a lesser extent, to the fact that some of the Pathans are money-lenders who had advanced money to mill-hands at usurious rates of interest."

The above paragraphs indicate that<sup>2</sup> communal troubles having an economic basis are not confined to the rural areas, but are found in the cities as well. The *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*<sup>3</sup> assigns indebtedness as one of the major causes responsible for the low standard of living of the industrial worker. The majority of the industrial workers are said to be in debt for the greater part of their working lives. A common rate of interest is "one anna in the rupee," that is, one anna's interest each month on each rupee borrowed—which works out at about 75 per cent per year, exclusive of compound interest.

<sup>1</sup> P. 10.

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<sup>3</sup> Chapter xiii.

150 per cent or more per year is stated to be not uncommon. The interest rate in the city is higher than in the rural areas because of the uncertainty involved. The city worker moves from one mill to another, or even back to his village, which makes him considerable of a risk. Hence though the money-lender is genuinely hated, he is also taken advantage of, and does not receive an income in proportion to the interest which he charges. The fact that the money-lender far too often endeavours to collect his money by force does not add to his popularity, but simply adds new fuel to the already smouldering fire which may break out into flame at any time, as in Bombay in 1929.

The employment of strike-breakers causes trouble in any country, but the fighting is usually confined to the displaced workers and the strike-breakers. In the Bombay Riots of 1929 a quarrel between workers in an isolated section of the city was played up by agitators into a communal affair, which spread throughout the city, bringing Hindus and Muslims, who had no connection with industry and who had no idea of the original causes of the trouble, into open conflict. The workers who did understand something of the issues involved regarded the struggle as a definite attempt to protect the economic position of their respective communities. Since I am discussing this subject at length in chapter vi, I shall simply make mention of it at this point.

During the long period of Muslim domination in India, there was constant intercourse between India and the Muslim world. Traders brought their articles for sale and exchange. Soldiers and adventurers were

attracted by the love of excitement and the hope of gain. Religionists felt the call to proclaim their message. Governments needed qualified men to fill their positions of responsibility. Kings imported scholars, poets, skilled workmen, and artists. Arabia, Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, and other nations sent their contingents to India—some to cast their lot with India and to remain, others to return to their own countries. This varied number of Muslim immigrants brought with them new ideas, the experience of other nations, new physical vitality, and thus served as a stimulus to Indian Islam. The language of the early invaders was Arabic, but with the passing of time Arabic gave way to Persian as the language of the official classes, and Persian continued to occupy a pre-eminent position until the nineteenth century. As we have already noted, the decline of the Mogul Empire which began with Aurangzeb continued under his successors, until with the rise of the British to power a totally new situation confronted the country.

When Lord Bentinck in 1835 made his decision that English was to be the future medium of instruction, he set in motion far greater forces than he could have realized. The substitution of English for Persian as the official language really marks a crisis in the history of the Muslims in India. Hinduism, during the course of its history, had shown a marked adaptability to circumstances. It was also able to adapt itself to the influx of Western ideas. Islam, with its simple but rigid creed, found Western education unpalatable, and at points in direct opposition to the teachings of Islam. As Arthur Mayhew has so well pointed out, "There

are no clear signs that the authorities recognized at the outset that the antagonism between Hindu and Mohammedan, or to put it less crudely, the absence of any positive unifying aspirations, of which they must have been aware, required any distinction of educational treatment. With the incurable optimism that characterizes all who sow without the prospect of having to eat the fruits, they probably thought that a uniform dressing of useful information would speedily equalize all kinds of soils. Macaulay and Trevelyan seem to have had in mind the levelling influence of medieval education when Roman Christianity spread a uniform culture over Western Europe. They forgot that the subsequent growth of nationalism had produced in the same area, smaller and less diversified than India, types of institutions as profoundly unlike as the Rugby of their days and the Prussian gymnasium."<sup>1</sup>

The supplanting of Persian by English not only had an effect upon Muslim employment in Government service, it also produced a genuine feeling of discontent among the orthodox Muslim masses. Encouraged by the orthodox religious leaders the secular Government schools were boycotted. Established in their conviction that the only education worth pursuing was a religious education, the Muslims were willing to forgo the possible material benefits which might accrue through an English education. The Hindus, on the other hand, accepted conditions as they were, partook of Western education, and entered such service as was open to them. The Hindus thus obtained

<sup>1</sup> *The Education of India*, p. 49 f.



a distinct initial advantage in the race for Government posts.

It was not until after the Mutiny that any serious effort was made to popularize Western education among the Muslims. It was Sir Sayed Ahmed who sounded the trumpet-call to a Muslim educational awakening. Realizing the futility of the prevailing Muslim attitude, he advocated social, religious, and educational reform with the end in view of bringing Islam into touch and harmony with current life and thought. Despite orthodox opposition he founded the Muslim Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh in 1875.

The passing of university examinations is the essential passport to Government service. Hence we have in every province in India multitudes of Indian youth appearing for the matriculation and higher examinations in the hope that they may be successful in securing Government appointments. Tremendous sacrifices are made by parents and relatives to provide educational opportunities, but it is obvious that only a relatively small number of those who are qualified can actually secure the coveted posts. The result is that the matter of individual employment assumes a communal complexion. Young students, who profess to be non-communal in their outlook, summon all the communal resources which they can recruit to help them to secure jobs. Even the appointment of a minor clerk is apt to have an important political repercussion. My own eyes were first opened to this situation some years ago when I innocently recommended a boy, whom I felt to be well qualified, for a very minor post in the Municipality. I soon discovered that for this

ordinary clerkship a first-class political tussle was in progress, with both Hindu and Muslim leaders bringing all their influence to bear in favour of their particular candidates. Needless to say, my friend was not appointed. It is the rare local body in India (just as in my own country) where the best man receives the position. The communal influence is too strong to be resisted.

The introduction of Western education has brought about a certain superficial unity between educated Hindus and educated Muslims, but withal it has not lessened the tension which accompanies the communal struggle for jobs. As Mayhew points out, "Hindus and Muslims trained on the same lines have co-operated successfully in professional and public life. United by a common language and sentimentally, if superficially, actuated by common Western ideas they have been able to emphasize more effectively their common grievances. . . . But even within the world of political and racial strife the dust of conflict has been unable to hide the fact that the constructive aims and positive methods of Hindu and Mohammedan remain as fundamentally antagonistic as their outlook on life. As an avenue to employment, as an arsenal in which the weapons of destructive criticism and resentment are forged, our education has united all. In its failure to reach the heart or affect the springs of constructive activity it has left the two religions in opposite camps."<sup>1</sup>

What the future holds I cannot say. But if Western experience teaches anything, I believe that in the years ahead the economic situation will perhaps,

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 52 f.

more than any other influence, operate towards a lessening of communal tension. With the growing industrialization of the country the interests of the workers and the interests of the employers are certain to cut across communal lines. A Hindu industrialist will find himself more akin to a Muslim industrialist than to a fellow-Hindu agriculturist. Similarly, in the new line-up, agriculturists of both communities will find themselves uniting to resist the growing domination of the city, while Hindu and Muslim industrial workers will find an increasing bond of sympathy. But until the number of opportunities for gainful employment increases to a much greater extent than at present, the communal scramble for posts will continue. As the economic condition of the country improves, that communal tension which has its roots in the struggle for existence will improve with it. But that day still lies ahead.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CAUSES OF HINDU-MUSLIM TENSION: POLITICAL<sup>1</sup>

THE British were drawn to India in the first place, not by the idea of conquest, but for the purpose of trade. In 1599, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the merchants of London were granted a charter for carrying on trade with the East. But as time went on the Company came to assume territorial responsibility in India, until with the collapse of the Muslim Empire it gradually became the dominant ruling power. In 1773 Parliament intervened in Indian affairs by passing a Regulating Act, which was amended by Pitt's Act of 1784 and again by the Charter Act of 1793. By the terms of the Charter Act of 1833 the Company ceased to function as a commercial organization, becoming a political and administrative body. This Act placed both civil and military authority in the hands of the Governor-General in Council and defined the relation of the central administration to the subordinate provincial administration. Then came the Mutiny, and in 1858 the government of India was transferred from the Company to the Crown. The Act of 1858 made little change in the administration of government. The Governor-General became the Viceroy, the sole representative of the British Crown

<sup>1</sup> For the historical materials introducing this chapter I am indebted in large measure to the *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, vol. i.

in India, but the general administrative set-up remained quite as before.

By the Indian Councils Act of 1861 the membership of the Governor-General's Legislative Council was increased by adding twelve instead of six "additional" members to the Governor-General's Executive Council. The functions of the provincial legislative councils were strictly limited, their duty being practically that of "rubber-stamping" the legislation initiated by the Executive.

It was the Indian Councils Act of 1892 which first provided for separate Muslim representation in Government. By the terms of this Act another five "additional" members were admitted to the Governor-General's Legislative Council, while the majority of the non-official seats in the provincial councils were to be filled by recommendation—principally the recommendations of municipalities and district boards. The Act provided that Government should nominate representatives of various interests to the councils, in order that special interest groups or public bodies might have the opportunity of presenting their views in person. The Muslims were specified as one of the groups thus to be represented, though the actual selection of the representative lay not with the Muslim community but with the Governor.

In 1906, during the discussion preliminary to the Morley-Minto Reforms, a Muslim deputation headed by H.H. the Aga Khan first put forth the Muslim demands for separate representation, if the elective principle was to be adopted. It would thus appear that while the Muslims had no fears under the older

appointive system, they were distinctly apprehensive about what might happen under an elective system. Since this appeal has been the basis for all future Muslim demands it is worthy of somewhat detailed summary:<sup>1</sup>

(1) "In the whole of India the Muhammadans amounted to between a fifth and a quarter of the population—at that time 62 millions out of 294 millions.

(2) "The percentage of Muhammadans to Hindus was really larger than was usually admitted, owing to the classification of the depressed classes and animists as Hindus.

(3) "The importance of the Muhammadan population was shown by the fact that its number was greater than the population of any first-class European State except Russia.

(4) "The political importance of the community and its contribution to Imperial defence entitled it to a larger representation than that based on numbers alone.

(5) "Previous representation had been inadequate and the persons nominated were not always acceptable to the community.

(6) "With joint electoral bodies only Muhammadans sympathetic to the Hindus would ever be elected."

The Muslims therefore demanded :

(1) "Communal representation in accordance with their numerical strength, social position, and local influence, on district and municipal boards.

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, vol. i, pp. 183-184.

(2) "An assurance of Muhammadan representation on the governing bodies of universities.

(3) "Communal representation on provincial councils, election being by special electoral colleges composed of Muhammadan landlords, lawyers, merchants, and representatives of other important interests, university graduates of certain standing and members of district and municipal boards.

(4) "The number of Muhammadan representatives in the Imperial Legislative Council should not depend upon their numerical strength, and Muhammadans should never be in an ineffective minority. They should be elected as far as possible (as opposed to being nominated), election being by special Muhammadan colleges composed of landowners, lawyers, merchants, members of provincial councils, fellows of universities, etc."

In replying to the Muslim delegation, Lord Minto said, "The pith of your address, as I understand it, is a claim that under any system of representation, whether it affects a municipality or a district board or legislative council, in which it is proposed to introduce or increase an electoral organization, the Muhammadan community should be represented as a community. You point out that in many cases electoral bodies as now constituted cannot be expected to return a Muhammadan candidate, and that if by chance they did so, it could only be at the sacrifice of such a candidate's views to those of a majority opposed to his community, whom he would in no way represent; and you justly claim that your position should be estimated

not only on your numerical strength but in respect to the political importance of your community and the service it has rendered to the Empire. I am entirely in accord with you. Please do not misunderstand me. I make no attempt to indicate by what means the representation of communities can be obtained, but I am as firmly convinced as I believe you to be that any electoral representation in India would be doomed to mischievous failure which aimed at granting a personal enfranchisement regardless of the beliefs and traditions of the communities composing the population of this continent."

The Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, which enlarged both the Indian and the provincial legislative councils and provided for the election of certain members, granted the Muslims additional members in each council, such members to be chosen by a separate Muslim electorate. By the terms of the Act the separate Muslim electorate was entitled to choose six representatives to the Indian Legislative Council, two representatives to the Madras and Assam provincial councils, four to the Bombay, Bihar and Orissa, and United Provinces Councils, and five to the Bengal Council. At the same time Muslims retained the right to vote in the general electorates. This system of separate communal electorates has continued down to the present day—an ever-present source of controversy.

Under the influence of the democratic ideals generated by the World War, His Majesty's Government declared that the goal of British policy in India was to be "the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization



of, responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire." The Secretary of State, Mr. Montagu, and the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, made a careful study of the situation, embodying their conclusions in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report (1918).

The Montagu-Chelmsford Report considered carefully the subject of communal electorates. Its authors were convinced that communal electorates were not only divisive but also a "very serious hindrance to the development of the self-governing principle." They criticized the system as opposed to the teaching of history and as perpetuating sectarian divisions, but logic was unable to withstand the pressure of the Muslims, and when the Act was finally framed the principle of communal electorates was retained.

The Muslims not only pointed to the Act of 1909 as precedent, but also to the Lucknow Pact of 1916, an agreement of representatives of both Hindus and Muslims, endorsed by both the Congress and the All-India Muslim League. By the terms of this agreement separate electorates for Muslims were to be continued, and a formula was laid down for Muslim representation in the councils. The general principle adopted was that in those provinces in which Muslims were in a minority they would receive council representation in excess of their numbers, while in the provinces in which they formed a majority their representation would be slightly less than that to which they were actually entitled. Thus in the Punjab the Muslims were to receive 50 per cent of the elected Indian seats; in the United Provinces, 30 per cent; in Bengal, 40 per cent; in Bihar and Orissa, 25 per cent; in the Central Provinces,

15 per cent; in Madras, 15 per cent; and in Bombay, 33½ per cent.

The Fact also provided that one-third of the Indian elected members to the All-Indian Legislative Council should be Muslims, and elected by separate Muslim electorates.

Hence it was that by the Act of 1919 the Indian voters were divided into two general constituencies—the Muslim and the non-Muslim, with the Lucknow Pact as the guide for Muslim representation.

We must now retrace our steps somewhat as we sketch the development of the nationalist movement in India, with particular reference to the relation of the Muslims to the Indian National Congress. The nationalist movement, during its first two decades, was almost entirely a Hindu movement. The Muslims, during the 'eighties of the last century, were as a group educationally backward, and it was the feeling of such leaders as Sir Syed Ahmed that the principal energies of the Muslim leaders should be spent in the educational uplift of their own community rather than in participation in a political movement dominated by Hindus.

The slogan of the early nationalists was "Back to the Vedas," which meant not only an attempt to revive ancient Hindu culture but also to revive an aggressive Brahmanism. When the rampant Hindu nationalist spoke of purging the sacred soil of India of the foreigner, he meant the Muslim as well as the Englishman, and it was but natural that the Muslims should have had some misgivings.

The Muslims, on their part, had memories of a

Mogul India, when the Muslims held the upper hand, and which represented to them a golden age just as significant as the Vedic golden age of the Hindus. Hence it was that the Muslims turned towards the British, not because they loved them more, but because they had less distrust of the British Raj than of Brahman rule. Indian Muslims were not unaffected by the wave of unrest which seemed to be sweeping the East, but this unrest found its expression more in the Pan-Islamic movement than in the Indian nationalist movement.

The partitioning of Bēngal during the Vice-Royalty of Lord Curzon (1905) awakened a storm of Hindu resentment, for the Muslims were in a majority in the newly created Province of East Bengal and Assam. The Muslim reply was the organization of the All-India Muslim League for the purpose of furthering in an active manner the political interests of the Muslim community. We have already noted the demands formulated by the League and the recognition of Muslim claims in the Reforms of 1909.

Italy's attack upon the Turkish dependency of Tripoli in 1911 occasioned widespread resentment among Indian Muslims, particularly as Great Britain remained neutral. The outbreak of the Balkan War in 1912, in which Christian Balkan States were arrayed against Turkey, occasioned even more resentment. For many Indian Muslims this war was a holy war and Indian Muslim sympathy for Turkey was demonstrated in a practical manner by the despatch of an Indian medical mission in December of 1912. In *The New World of Islam*,<sup>1</sup> Lothrop Stoddard quotes a prominent

<sup>1</sup> P. 58.

Indian Muslim as well expressing the feeling of his co-religionists when he wrote: "The King of Greece orders a new Crusade. From the London Chancelleries rise calls to Christian fanaticism, and Saint Petersburg already speaks of the planting of the Cross on the dome of Sant' Sophia. To-day they speak thus; to-morrow they will thus speak of Jerusalem and the Mosque of Omar. Brothers! Be ye of one mind, that it is the duty of every True Believer to hasten beneath the Khalifa's banner and to sacrifice his life for the safety of the faith." Mr. Stoddard quotes another Indian Muslim leader as thus adjuring the British authorities: "I appeal to the present Government to change its anti-Turkish attitude before the fury of millions of Moslem fellow-subjects is kindled to a blaze and brings disaster."

And yet the outbreak of the World War in 1914 found Indian Muslims loyal. Despite the fact that the Caliph issued a formal summons to a Holy War, Indian Muslims cast their lot with Britain, but in return they fully expected that Britain would use her influence to secure favourable peace terms for Turkey. When these expectations were not realized, there was widespread discontent, which crystallized in the Khilafat movement—an organization of Indian Muslims looking towards the restoration of the Caliphate.

The practical result of the Khilafat agitation in India was that for the first time in the history of the Congress a large section of Muslims became active Congressmen, joining Mr. Gandhi's non-co-operation movement in 1921-22. The bond of unity, however, was a common antipathy towards the British Government, rather

than a community of ideas between Hindus and Muslims. The result, of course, was that the unity could not last and has not lasted. Since the deposition of the Caliph by Kemal Pasha in 1924, the Khilafat organization has come to assume a position of militant communal leadership comparable to that exercised by the Hindu Maha Sabha.

A tragic illustration of religious fanaticism run riot is the so-called Moplah Rebellion in 1921. The Khilafat agitation, as it spread throughout the continent, made its way down the Malabar Coast and penetrated an area with a large population of illiterate Muslims of mixed Arab and Indian descent. Inspired by religious frenzy, these Muslims attacked their Hindu neighbours, offering them the choice of death or conversion, and killing, destroying temples, and burning villages. There was untold misery and bloodshed before the rebellion was put down and normal conditions restored.

In a preceding paragraph we pointed out how, for a short period of time during the non-co-operation movement of the early 1920's, there was a semblance of Hindu-Muslim unity. But when it actually began to appear as though self-government might lie within the realm of possibility, each community undertook to strengthen its own position and Hindu-Muslim unity quickly passed into an exaggerated form of Hindu-Muslim tension. Both parties were now playing for high stakes—for political prestige, for legislative seats, and for Government posts, and neither side was prepared to yield.

In the elections of 1926 communal divisions were clearly marked and the new Legislative Assembly was

practically organized on communal lines. The tendency towards communal divisions on all important points was only checked by the new interests created and new passions generated by the announcement of the appointment of the Indian Statutory Commission in November of 1927.

In addressing the Indian Legislature on August 29, 1927, His Excellency Lord Irwin said, "I am not exaggerating when I say that during the seventeen months that I have been in India the whole landscape has been overshadowed by the lowering clouds of communal tension, which have repeatedly discharged their thunderbolts, spreading far throughout the land their devastating havoc. From April to July last year, Calcutta seemed to be under the mastery of some evil spirit, which so gripped the minds of men that in their insanity they held themselves absolved from the most sacred restraints of human conduct. Since then we have seen the same sinister influences at work in Pabna, Rawalpindi, Lahore, and many other places, and have been forced to look upon that abyss of unchained human passions that lies too often beneath the surface of habit and law. In less than eighteen months, so far as numbers are available, the toll taken by this bloody strife has been between 250 and 300 killed, and over 2,500 injured. . . .

"I myself," continued His Excellency, "have long been considering anxiously whether any action by Government could help to stimulate that general desire of reconciliation without which nothing can be done. It is not easy, or perhaps possible, for me to give a positive or assured answer to these reflections. In

matters of this kind, each man must search his own heart and answer for himself whether he does in truth and without reserve desire to play his part<sup>a</sup> as an apostle of peace, and whether those associated with him are like-minded. But this I can say. If it were represented to me 'by the responsible leaders of the great communities that they thought a useful purpose might be served by my convening a conference myself with the object of frankly facing the causes of these miserable differences, and then in a spirit of determined good-will considering whether any practical solution or mitigation of them could be found, I should welcome it as evidence of a firm resolve to leave no way unsearched that might disclose means of rescuing India from her present unhappy state. And, if these representations were made by those who occupy such a position in their communities as to permit me to assume that the communities would accept and abide by any decisions at which they might arrive on their behalf, then, allying myself with them" and such other leaders of public thought as might be willing to assist, I should gladly and cordially throw my whole energies into this honourable quest."

Instead of accepting Lord Irwin's offer immediately, a group of members of the Legislative Assembly decided that they themselves would attempt to discover the way to communal peace. Accordingly a conference of Hindus and Muslims, under the chairmanship of Mr. M. A. Jinnah, assembled in Simla in September. At once a difference of opinion appeared. The Hindus desired the conference to consider the religious and social causes of communal tension, while the Muslims

held that communal peace was dependent upon a satisfactory solution of the political problem. The Hindu view prevailed, and though the conference confined its discussion in large measure to the subjects of cow-slaughter and music before mosques, even then it was impossible to come to any general agreement.

In October of the same year (1927) a Unity Conference was convened in Calcutta by the All-India Congress Committee. This Conference defined the principal causes of communal tension as attempts at conversion or reconversion, music before mosques, and cow-slaughter. The Conference resolved to admit the principle of conversion or reconversion, provided that it was carried out openly, without force, and confined to persons over eighteen years of age. Regarding the other two subjects, the Conference resolution reads, "Whereas no community in India should impose or seek to impose its religious obligations or religious views upon any other community, but free profession and practice of religion should, subject to public order and morality, be guaranteed to every community and person, Hindus are at liberty to take processions and play music before mosques at any time for religious or social purposes, but there should be no stoppage for special demonstration in front of the mosque nor shall songs or music played in front of such mosques be such as is calculated to cause annoyance, special disturbance, or offence to worshippers in the mosques. Mussalmans shall be at liberty to sacrifice or slaughter cows in exercise of their rights in any town or village in any place not being a thorough-



fare, nor one in the vicinity of a temple nor one exposed to the gaze of Hindus. Cows should not be led in procession or in demonstration for sacrifice or slaughter. Having regard to the deep-rooted sentiment of the Hindu community in the matter of cow-killing the Mussalman community is earnestly appealed to, to so conduct cow-sacrifice as not to cause any annoyance to Hindus of the town or village concerned."

Since neither the Hindu Maha Sabha nor the All-India Muslim League were represented at the Calcutta Conference, the resolutions passed were without particular force, while the really important questions of communal electorates, communal representation in the public services, or the redistribution of provinces were not even discussed.

The annual meetings of the Congress, the Liberal Federation, and the All-India Muslim League all dealt with the communal issue, and in February 1928 a gathering representative of a considerable section of Indian political opinion (though the majority of the Muslims were unrepresented) met in Delhi as the "All-Parties Conference." This Conference made an honest attempt to deal with the political differences which were really holding Hindus and Muslims apart, such as communal electorates, the separation of Sind, and the status of the North-West Frontier Province. The representatives of the Hindu Maha Sabha flatly opposed the separation of Sind and the application of the Reforms to the North-West Frontier Province, because the addition of Sind and the North-West Frontier Province to the provinces already having a Muslim majority, viz. the Punjab and Bengal, would make

four provinces out of ten (Burma excluded) in which the Muslims would have a majority, thus increasing to a considerable extent Muslim influence upon the future course of Indian politics. The Conference therefore adjourned without having arrived at any definite settlement, to meet again in Bombay in May to discuss the matter further.

The principal outcome of the May Conference was the decision to appoint a small committee to determine the principles of a constitution for India, and to prepare a report thereon. The Committee was instructed to give "the fullest consideration to the resolutions which had been passed from time to time by the various important communal, political, and other organizations in India." The Report, known as the Nehru Report, was submitted to a special meeting of the All-Parties Conference in Lucknow in late August 1928. The Conference accepted the resolution calling for the separation of Sind from Bombay, agreed to the extension of Reforms to the North-West Frontier and Baluchistan, to the adoption of a system of general electorates based on adult suffrage and with no reservation of seats for any community in the Punjab, and to a reconsideration of the question of communal electorates after a period of ten years.

Neither Hindu nor Muslim opinion was satisfied by the Conference resolutions and so considerable interest was aroused in the December session of the Conference, where it was hoped a unity formula might be discovered before the annual meetings of the major political groups. The Muslim claims, however, as presented by Mr. Jinnah, were not accepted and the

gulf between the Hindus and Muslims was widened rather than narrowed.

In the meantime, preparations had been made for holding an All-Muslim Conference for the purpose of formulating a united Muslim policy. This Conference, which convened at Delhi on December 31, 1928, was attended by representative Muslims from all parts of India, and the resolution passed by the Conference can be looked upon as a quite authoritative statement of Muslim opinion. For this reason I quote it at length :

“Whereas, in view of India’s vast extent and its ethnological, linguistic, administrative, and geographical or territorial divisions, the only form of government suitable to Indian conditions is a federal system with complete autonomy and residuary powers vested in the constituent states, the Central Government having control only of such matters of common interest as may be specifically entrusted to it by the constitution ;

“And whereas it is essential that no bill, resolution, motion, or amendment regarding inter-communal matters be moved, discussed, or passed by any legislature, central or provincial, if a three-fourth majority of the members of either the Hindu or the Muslim community affected thereby in that legislature oppose the introduction, discussion, or passing of such bill, resolution, motion, or amendment ;

“And whereas the right of Muslims to elect their representatives on the various Indian legislatures through separate electorates is now the law of the land and Muslims cannot be deprived of that right without their consent ;

“And whereas in the conditions existing at present in India and so long as these conditions continue to exist, representation in various legislatures and other statutory self-governing bodies of Muslims through their own separate electorates is essential in order to bring into existence a really representative democratic government ;

“And whereas as long as Musalmans are not satisfied that their rights and interests are adequately safeguarded in the constitution they will in no way consent to the establishment of joint electorates, whether with or without conditions ;

“And whereas for the purposes aforesaid, it is essential that Musalmans should have their due share in the central and provincial cabinets ;

“And whereas it is essential that representation of Musalmans in the various legislatures and other statutory self-governing bodies should be based on a plan whereby the Muslim majority in those provinces where Musalmans constitute a majority of the population shall in no way be affected and in the provinces in which Musalmans constitute a minority they shall have representation in no case less than that enjoyed by them under existing law ;

“And whereas representative Muslim gatherings in all provinces in India have unanimously resolved that with a view to provide adequate safeguards for the protection of Muslim interests in India as a whole, Musalmans should have the right of 33 per cent representation of the central legislature and this conference entirely endorses that demand ;

“And whereas on ethnological, linguistic, geo-

graphical, and administrative grounds the province of Sind has no affinity whatever with the rest of the Bombay Presidency and its unconditional constitution into a separate province, possessing its own separate legislative and administrative machinery, on the same lines as in other provinces of India is essential in the interests of its people, the Hindu minority in Sind being given adequate and effective representation in excess of their proportion in the population, as may be given to Musalmans in provinces in which they constitute a minority of population ;

“And whereas the introduction of constitutional reforms in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan along such lines as may be adopted in other provinces of India is essential not only in the interests of those provinces but also of the constitutional advance in India as a whole, the Hindu minorities in those provinces being given adequate and effective representation in excess of their proportion in population, as is given to the Muslim community in provinces in which it constitutes a minority of the population ;

“And whereas it is essential in the interests of Indian administration that provision should be made in the constitution giving Muslims their adequate share along with other Indians in all services of the State and on all statutory self-governing bodies, having due regard to the requirements of efficiency ;

“And whereas having regard to the political conditions obtaining in India, it is essential that the Indian constitution should embody adequate safeguards for protection and promotion of Muslim education,

languages, religion, personal law, and Muslim charitable institutions, and for their due share in grants-in-aid;

“And whereas it is essential that the constitution should provide that no change in the Indian constitution shall, after its inauguration, be made by the central legislature except with the concurrence of all the states constituting the Indian federation;

“This Conference emphatically declares that no constitution, by whomsoever proposed or devised, will be acceptable to Indian Musalmans unless it conforms with the principles embodied in this resolution.”

It was but natural that the Muslim counter-proposals to the Nehru Report should stimulate a Hindu reaction, and hence it was that the Hindu Maha Sabha, meeting in Surat in late March 1929, declared that since Muslim leaders had refused to accept the Nehru Report the Maha Sabha was opposed to granting special treatment to any community.

Before discussing communalism in the Round Table Conferences it might be well to recall the Muslim position in India. For a long period of years the Muslims were the rulers of the major portion of the territory which to-day constitutes British India. In fact, only the Punjab, the Central Provinces, and a part of the Bombay Presidency were acquired by the British from non-Muslim rulers. According to the census of 1931, Indian Muslims number over 77½ million, as against 238½ million of Hindus. In the north-west the Muslims are in a large majority. In the Punjab their numbers equal approximately the com-

bined total of the Hindus and the Sikhs. In a large section of eastern Bengal the Muslims predominate. Going southward their numbers lessen.

While many Muslims still cherish the tradition of Muslim ascendancy, the majority of the leaders are more practically concerned with simply safeguarding what they consider to be their legitimate minority interests. The Indian Statutory Commission<sup>1</sup> diagnosed the communal tension resulting from the constitutional situation as "a manifestation of the anxieties and ambitions aroused in both communities by the prospect of India's political future. So long as authority was firmly established in British hands, and self-government was not thought of, Hindu-Muslim rivalry was confined within a narrower field. This was not merely because the presence of a neutral bureaucracy discouraged strife. A further reason was that there was little for members of one community to fear from the predominance of the other. The comparative absence of communal strife in the Indian states to-day may be similarly explained. Many who are well acquainted with conditions in British India a generation ago would testify that at that epoch so much good feeling had been engendered between the two sides that communal tension as a threat to civil peace was at a minimum. But the coming of the Reforms and the anticipation of what may follow them have given new point to Hindu-Moslem competition. . . . The one community naturally lays claim to the rights of a majority and relies upon its qualifications of better education and greater wealth; the other is all the

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, vol. i, pp. 29-30.

more determined on those accounts to secure effective protection for its members, and does not forget that it represents the previous conquerors of the country. It wishes to be assured of adequate representation and of a full share of official posts.

"Hence has arisen a situation which it is of the most urgent importance for the influences which operate on public opinion in India to relieve. But no cure is likely to be found by ascribing false causes to the disease. The true cause, as it seems to us, is the struggle for political power and for the opportunities which political power confers. We are fully alive to the arguments against communal representation, but we cannot think that it is the effective cause of this deplorable friction. At the same time we are no less clearly convinced that separate communal electorates serve to perpetuate political divisions on purely communal lines, and we have every sympathy with those who look forward to the day when a growing sense of common citizenship and a general recognition of the rights of minorities will make such arrangements unnecessary."

Nevertheless, the Commission recommended communal representation for Muslims, Europeans, and Anglo-Indians in the provincial legislatures, but did not recommend preferential treatment for any group with respect to the provincial executives or cabinets.

At the sessions of the Round Table Conference the communal problem was very much to the fore. On the one side were the Muslims, standing on the platform of the Delhi Resolution of January 1929, demanding the safeguarding of their minority rights; the assurance



of statutory Muslim majorities in Bengal and the Punjab; the communal composition of provincial and central cabinets; a communal veto to such legislation as appeared to be opposed to Muslim religious and social interests; and an elected 33 per cent Muslim representation in the forthcoming Central Legislature. On the other side was the group under the influence of the Hindu Maha Sabha, also strongly opinionated, and unwilling to negotiate. The Conference split over the percentages of representation in the Punjab, and despite the pleadings of both the British Government and the more liberal-minded among the Indian delegation, the communal deadlock could not be broken.

From the beginning the Minorities Subcommittee agreed that the success of responsible self-government in India was dependent upon the co-operation of all communities, and that in order to secure such co-operation the new constitution must convey assurance to the various communities that their interests would not be prejudiced. It was, therefore, felt that each community should present an authoritative statement of claims, as well as definite proposals relative to the safeguarding of community interests. Unfortunately, however, the major communal groups approached this problem from their own narrow standpoint rather than from the point of view of India as a whole, with the result already indicated. Although lip-service was paid to joint electorates, the real discussion concerned joint electorates with reservation of seats *versus* separate electorates, and the problem of determining the proper amount of representation to be given to each community.

Since there was no agreement among the delegates, His Majesty's Government, in August of 1932, formulated a provisional Communal Award, in order that the work of constitution-making might go forward. The Award made no attempt to decide the minor issues at stake between the various communities. It did attempt to solve the problem of proportionate representation in the provincial legislatures. In the provinces with a clear Hindu majority, the Award guaranteed Muslims seats in excess of their population ratio. In the Punjab, the Muslims with about 57 per cent of the population were awarded 49 per cent of the seats; and the Sikhs, with 13 per cent of the population, were awarded 18 per cent of the seats—as against their communal claim of 25 per cent. In Bengal, the Muslims, with about 55 per cent of the total population, were awarded 47½ per cent of the seats. In both instances the award, while short of the actual Muslim population superiority, would appear to give the Muslims a very reasonable chance of actual political control.

In announcing the Communal Award, His Majesty's Government declared themselves ready to withdraw the scheme if all the parties in India would present a fully agreed upon alternative scheme.

It was not to be expected that the decision of His Majesty's Government would be welcomed by all shades of Indian opinion and, of course, it was not. Following the modification of the decision in respect to the representation of the depressed classes as a result of Mr. Gandhi's dramatic fast in September of 1932, attempts were also made to bring about an

Indian solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem. After preliminary conversations, a Unity Conference was convened at Allahabad in early November. Although the Conference reached certain decisions and a cable was actually sent to the Round Table Conference in London that the communal problem was settled, the decisions of the Conference were repudiated by both a Muslim Conference at Delhi and by the working committee of the Hindu Maha Sabha, and hence the provisions of the Communal Award remained unaltered.

The latest attempt to replace the Communal Award by an agreed Indian settlement occurred in late February of 1935, when conversations between Hindu and Muslim leaders were held in Delhi. At this Conference Mr. Jinnah, on behalf of the Muslim League, presented the Muslim terms, but again no solution was reached. A fundamental of the Muslim proposals was that any agreed scheme must not alter the Communal Decision to the detriment of the Muslims. While the Hindu leaders saw some point to making an agreement in India, they felt that as long as their demands remained unmet there was no practical gain in changing the "award" into a "settlement," and so the deadlock has continued.

The new Government of India Act (1935) continues the provisions of the Communal Award, though the Indian Government and the legislatures are empowered to suggest changes in the Award after the expiry of ten years. The British Government will, however, have the right to consult the Indian Government and legislatures within the ten-year period and

suggest changes. But official assurance has been given that "within the range of the Communal Award His Majesty's Government would not propose . . . to recommend to Parliament any change unless such change had been agreed to between the communities concerned."<sup>1</sup> Here the matter remains, and probably will so remain for some time to come.

<sup>1</sup> Press Communiqué in *The Times of India*, July 2, 1935.

## CHAPTER SIX

### COMMUNALISM RUN WILD: THE BOMBAY RIOTS OF 1929, A SOCIO-PSYCHO- LOGICAL CASE STUDY

HAVING analysed some of the causes of communal tension, it is now my purpose to describe in detail an actual instance of serious communal disturbance, in order that I may use this case study as the basis for a socio-psychological study of some of the elements involved in communal conflict. I have chosen the Bombay Riots of January-February 1929 because as an interested resident of one of the disturbed areas I had ample opportunity to study the situation at first hand and to draw certain conclusions from this study.

For a number of years previous to 1928 the Bombay Textile Industry had been in an unenviable situation. War conditions led to inflation and expansion, followed by a long period of depression. During the time of prosperity high dividends were paid and relatively small sums set aside for replacement. The mill labourers had repeatedly protested against low wages, while the employers had repeatedly professed their inability to pay higher. The mill-owners made much of Japanese competition and contended that the Bombay mills were fighting for their very lives.

The dispute came to a head in April 1928, when several of the Bombay mills endeavoured to put into effect certain recommendations of the Textile Tariff Board, designed to stabilize and rejuvenate the textile

industry. Inasmuch as the plan called for additional work upon the part of some workers, and hence the loss of jobs by various others, a group of extreme Labour leaders came forward with the proposal for a general strike.

The textile mills of Bombay are for the most part in the northern section of the city, with a considerable number in close proximity. Accordingly, when the operatives of the Mahomedbhoy and Currimbhoy Mills went out on strike on the morning of April 16th, the news spread rapidly, and by evening of the same day ten mills were closed down. The extreme Labour leaders at once began a campaign to make the proposed general strike a reality, and many mass meetings were held for this purpose. Within ten days the movement had spread throughout the entire city, with the result that every cotton mill in Bombay save one was closed, and some 150,000 men were thrown out of employment.

From the beginning of the strike there was disagreement among the various Labour leaders. The moderate leaders were largely discredited, and the extremist leaders set up a strike committee for the direction of the struggle. Mass meetings of the strikers were held daily and the workers exhorted to stand firm.

Towards the end of April, the Governor of Bombay attempted to discover a way to peace. After a series of interviews the mill-owners agreed to confer with the leaders of recognized, registered unions. The Labour leaders, accordingly, submerged their differences to the extent of forming a joint strike committee, which early in May issued a statement of the workers' demands. The mill-owners received the statement and a few

days later published their own terms for the reopening of the mills. The strike leaders advised the men to hold out for their original demands and the deadlock continued until the month of October, when the workers resumed their duties.

On December 7th in the same year a strike occurred among the workers employed in the oil installations at Sewri. Instead of yielding to the strikers' demands, the management employed Pathans to take the place of the strikers. The Pathans are hardy Muslims from the North-West Frontier or the Punjab, and are reputed to be fearless. In Bombay they are largely employed as seamen or dock workers, watchmen, or money-lenders. In the latter capacity they are genuinely hated. The result of the Pathans being engaged as strike-breakers was the inevitable one of open fighting between the Pathans and the strikers.

The displaced oil workers, who were mostly Hindus, appealed to the mill workers for their support, and on January 18, 1929, four Pathan watchmen employed in the New China Mill were set upon by the workers and three of them were killed.

It should be noted at this point that for months during the general strike, and also during the period of the oil strike, leaders of the Red Flag Union had been inciting the men to open violence, both against the police and Government and against the mill-owners and strike-breakers. The following quotations are typical:<sup>1</sup>

(1) "Let him [the policeman] come with a revolver, or king's photo in his hands, but if he has no warrant

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Bombay Riots Inquiry Committee, 1929, p. 41 f.*

you can murder him. You must protect your own chawl. Do not depend upon police. If a policeman comes in your chawl, assault him. If you do not assault the police, your strike is of no avail, and you are not worth your salt. . . . What is the use of going to strike when you cannot use your physical strength on the police?"<sup>1</sup>

(2) "Even though some of our men get killed, still we labourers shall make a revolution and revolt to drive out the oppressors, the Europeans, who are the rulers and the owners, their friends, their hirelings, the mill-owners, the owners of tramways and railways, and the owners of workshops, from this country, and will raise the red flag of revolt. We know what we are doing. . . . I tell three times that we peasants and labourers have raised a flag of revolt, and, so long as Government, mill-owners, and their hirelings use their weapons against us, we will not remain without killing them, so long as there is strength in our wrist."<sup>2</sup>

On the very day that the three Pathan watchmen employed in the New China Mill were murdered, a Red Flag Union leader, in addressing a gathering of 4,000 mill hands, expressed his satisfaction that the mill hands had come with sticks in their hands to take up the cause of their brethren, the oil workers. It was the speaker's hope that the time would soon come when guns would take the place of *lathis* (sticks).

On January 5, 1929, *The Indian National Herald* of Bombay published a story that two Pathans had kidnapped a boy, and then two days later reported

<sup>1</sup> Extract from a speech delivered on June 1, 1928.

<sup>2</sup> Extract from a speech delivered on August 15, 1928.



the reappearance of the boy. Although the police record shows that the boy was not kidnapped, but had merely absconded, the rumour thus started continued to spread, until on February 4th Government felt it advisable to issue a notification upon the subject of the kidnapping of children. The Government statement denied that there was any truth in the various rumours of kidnapping and declared that the police had received no complaints about kidnapping. But despite this official denial the same paper that had started the kidnapping scare continued to keep the ghost alive by the following headlines :

"GOVERNMENT ASSURES PUBLIC THAT RUMOURS ARE UNFOUNDED.

"BUT OLD BORAH AND KHAR CITIZENS HAVE DIFFERENT TALES TO TELL."

In every Hindu bazaar rumours were current that Hindu children were being kidnapped by Pathans and being sent to Baroda to be offered up as sacrifices in connection with the building of a new bridge. No one knew of any actual case, but the rumours persisted, until upon the evening of February 2nd the first Pathan was assaulted. Upon the following day a Red Flag Union leader repeated the charge of kidnapping before a huge gathering of mill workers and stated that if Government could not stop these outrages his volunteers were quite prepared to take the matter in hand and to do it. On the same day several stray assaults occurred, and on February 4th and 5th groups of Hindu mill workers ranged through the streets hunting Pathans as they would hunt wild animals and doing them to death. Six were killed on the first

day, eleven on the second day, and many more were injured. The Pathans began to organize in self-defence, to concentrate in Muslim localities, and to move about only in groups. In the cross-lane back of our Neighbourhood House—a lane housing ordinarily some three hundred Pathans—about nine hundred men were concentrated. They were seeking safety rather than trouble, and from the standpoint of food alone their situation was a serious one. I myself moved among them, urging them to stay at home and remain quiet, providing them with games, and endeavouring to secure food for them.

Up until this point the trouble had not been an out-and-out communal affair. On February 5th, however, the Muslims began to rally to the support of the Pathans and a general Hindu-Muslim war was on. Both temples and mosques were attacked, and before order was finally restored, about 150 were dead and hundreds were injured.

I was a personal witness to a typical assault which was described by Dr. Nunan, the Police Surgeon, in his evidence before the Bombay Riots Inquiry Committee:<sup>1</sup>

“On the afternoon after the murder of some ten Pathans, i.e., on February 5th,” said Dr. Nunan, “I was working in the Police Hospital about midday, when I heard shouting in the street outside. I rushed out and saw some thirty Pathans rounding the corner of New Nagpada Road. They were armed with brass-bound *lathis*, and the leader, an aged man, carried a long plank of timber, with which he smashed in the shutters and doorways of several Hindu shops. When-

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Bombay Riots Inquiry Committee, 1929, pp. 6-7.*

ever a Hindu was seen a rush was made for him, but on that occasion no Hindu was caught. I went with them until some police arrived and shepherded them down Parel Road. About half an hour afterwards my attention was again called by shouting outside. A lorry driven by a Hindu came round the corner, and was attacked by a mob of Pathans.

"Several struck the driver and his mate with *lathis*, while one Pathan had climbed on the lorry, which was laden with bags, and, on top of the load, was beating a Hindu about the head with a short, heavy stick. The lorry stopped and the driver tried to ward off blows from his head. I shouted to him to drive on. He started the lorry again. I ran down the street after the lorry and near the Police Station the Hindu, who had been begging for mercy while the Pathan kept striking him on the head and upraised arms, *toppled over into the street*. I thought he was dead, but he was merely paralysed with terror. I dressed his injuries in the station . . . and had him taken to the hospital. The Pathan who had beaten him denied all knowledge of the affair. As I left the Police Station to walk back to my hospital, I stood for a moment in the crowd outside, and, as I stood, a man standing beside me cried 'Mara! Mara!' I turned him round, lifted his shirt, and found he had been stabbed in the back. The knife had struck his shoulder-blade, and so his life was saved. I dressed the wound in the street and sent him to the hospital. The extraordinary thing about this incident is that it occurred in a crowd outside a police station and that the assailant was not found. . . .

"I would say that the body of Pathans whom I accompanied on their raids in New Nagpada Road (because I saw that trouble was coming and knew that I would soon be wanted) could not be classed as hooligans. They were a grim, determined crowd, lusting for blood to avenge their dead. They discussed matters with me in a most friendly manner, saying that they were going to even matters up a bit. As they could find or catch no Hindus in the streets, they broke in the shop fronts methodically, as they proceeded along the street."

As the riots proceeded there were numerous cases of looting throughout the city—some motivated by actual hunger, but the greater number by the desire for plunder.

Though the majority of the casualties during the riots were due to individual murders rather than to mass fighting, there is no question but that groups both stirred up communal feeling and kept it alive. In all the cross lanes and *mohallas* excited crowds gathered together to discuss the latest developments and to breathe out threats of retaliation. There was no mincing of words. There was exhortation to action.

In the evidence before the Riots Inquiry Committee, both Muslim and Hindu public leaders were accused of inciting to riot, but the Committee held that the charges could not be substantiated.

On Thursday, February 7th, a meeting of representative citizens of Bombay was held to devise ways and means of coping with the situation. All communal leaders present pledged themselves to peace and to do their best to restrain their co-religionists. The leaders

began to move about in the affected areas, urging the people to preserve the peace.

By Friday noon the situation seemed much easier, despite the fact that the Muslim leaders faced the difficult problem of controlling the crowds of Muslims who would assemble for their Friday prayers. But a foolish move by certain leaders on Friday afternoon brought the situation once more to an inflamed state. These leaders, both Hindu and Muslim, working upon the theory that since they themselves had agreed upon peace, the mass of people would also agree, started processions throughout the city, displaying banners and proclaiming that the war was over. The people took up the cry, came out of their houses, and great mobs assembled. The procession passed on, the mobs remained in the streets, and the inevitable happened. That Friday night was the bloodiest night of all, but by the following Monday, due to the strenuous efforts of the police and the military and to the rigid application of a stringent curfew law, the situation had been brought pretty well under control.

It is interesting to note in connection with these riots the statement of the Inquiry Committee that "next to the communal menace the hooligan menace is the most serious one in Bombay. . . . In regard to the present riots the evidence shows that, though these disturbances were not begun by the hooligans, the riots would not have continued but for them. The hooligans in particular committed many murders and looted shops in the latter part of the riots."<sup>1</sup> The conclusion of the Inquiry Committee regarding the

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Bombay Riots Enquiry Committee, 1929, p. 17.

action of hooligans confirms my own experience. There is no denying that normally law-abiding citizens, under the stress of the prevailing excitement, were led to commit acts of violence. But it is also true that the lawless element in Bombay took advantage of the widespread confusion to carry on its own private activities and to settle personal differences.

Another point of interest from the psychological standpoint was the statement of the Commissioner of Police explaining why he did not call out the troops at an earlier moment. The Commissioner's evidence reads :

"On Sunday I did not consider that there was any necessity at all for calling out the troops. On Sunday there were certain stray assaults such as you may expect to find in any case of a kidnapping scare. On Monday the position was certainly very much worse; in this way, that the mills stopped work, and the railway workshops stopped work, and we unfortunately had a certain number of Pathans murdered; and to this extent the position was undoubtedly serious, but it was not so serious in my opinion as to warrant the calling out of the Military. My reason for this is that the trouble was due to the kidnapping scare, which we know to be absolutely without foundation; and therefore, if the disorder was due to something which was without foundation, it seemed to me that all that was required was to proclaim that there was no truth in that scare. I thought that the best plan to restore confidence would be a definite pronouncement by Government that there was no truth in the kidnapping scare. The attacks were being made because they were suspected to be kidnappers, and, if it was definitely

,

stated that there was no truth in these suspicions, then the effect ought to have been good. Therefore, though on Monday a certain number were murdered and a good many others were attacked, it did not appear to me necessary to call out the Military: but I got in communication with Government and suggested that they should definitely deny the truth of the rumours, because according to our information there was not a single case of kidnapping. They did so.”<sup>1</sup>

I have cited this evidence as an excellent illustration of the attempt to appeal to the intelligence of an emotionally excited people.

The riots described above are not only an account of communal strife but also an illustration of the action of the economic motive in communal conflict. The Muslim Pathans took the Hindu strikers' jobs and from this bread-and-butter struggle a whole city was thrown into confusion.

Another interesting observation is that while a considerable section of both Hindus and Muslims were roused to action by agitators, Hindus and Muslims working in the docks—which were at that time free from agitation—continued to work side by side in a peaceful manner. This would seem to demonstrate the importance of the agitator in bringing about communal strife.

It must also be noted that certain of the Bombay newspapers did nothing to allay the tension, to say the least. In fact, several of them might well have been regarded as the morale and propaganda organs of a war-like community.

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Bombay Riots Inquiry Committee, 1929, p. 23.*

Interviewing "the man in the street" in Nagpada regarding his opinion of the cause of the riots and the reason for their continuance, I received the following typical replies :

(1) "So many of our people are illiterate that it is easy to mislead them." (Reported by both Hindus and Muslims)

(2) "Our people believe all kinds of rumours and act accordingly." (Reported by both Hindus and Muslims)

(3) "Our papers mislead the people, and in time of trouble handbills and pamphlets are issued which arouse the people." (Muslim)

(4) "Much so-called communal trouble is personal. The riots offer good opportunities for *mavalis* (hooligans) to settle personal grudges." (Reported by both Hindus and Muslims)

(5) "On both sides there are many who fight just for the love of fighting." (Reported by both Hindus and Muslims)

(6) "There are numerous young men in both communities whose lives are very monotonous. Communal riots provide the opportunity for a bit of excitement." (Reported by both Hindus and Muslims)

(7) "Some people make it their business to profit from all confusion. They welcome the riots as an opportunity for plunder." (Reported by both Hindus and Muslims)

(8) "Many men who have failed in other ways find an opportunity to be leaders in communal riots." (Muslim)



(9) "Starvation is the father of both revolution and riots." (Hindu)

(10) "People are always ready to turn against their oppressors. The Hindus are ready to attack the Pathan money-lender and many Muslims who have their property mortgaged with Hindu *marwaris* are ready to take their revenge." (Reported by both Hindus and Muslims)

(11) "The relatives and friends of a person who is killed or injured naturally want to get their revenge." (Reported by both Hindus and Muslims)

(12) "A Muslim believes that if he dies in the cause of Islam he will go to heaven. This makes him ready to take the risks of communal fighting." (Muslim)<sup>1</sup>

As we follow the course of the Bombay riots we note several important points :

1. During the general strike, which continued through six months of 1928, the workers in the Bombay mill area were told repeatedly to disregard authority and to take matters into their own hands.

2. When the strike occurred in the oil installations at Sewri, the oil plants did not shut down but continued operations by employing Pathans as strike-breakers.

3. The strikers were urged by their leaders to take direct action against the Pathans.

4. The strikers, mostly Hindus, appealed to, and succeeded in winning the active support of, the Hindu mill workers.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also the list of causes of communal conflict, pp. 47-49, chapter iii.

5. Malicious rumours of kidnapping children were circulated against the Pathans.

6. Certain newspapers printed these rumours, elevating them to the apparent status of facts.

7. The Commissioner of Police urged Government to deny the rumours of kidnapping, which action was taken.

8. In the first place the riots were directed against the Pathans only.

9. In, the next phase the Muslims joined with the Pathans, making common cause against the Hindus.

10. The activities which followed were in the nature of

- (a) group fighting;
- (b) individual murderous attacks;
- (c) group looting;
- (d) individual looting.

11. The riots were kept going by the aroused and uncontrolled feelings of illiterate mobs stimulated by their own activities and by the harangues of irresponsible leaders.

12. Responsible citizens of both groups agreed to peace and assumed that their agreement would be accepted by all.

13. The "peace processions" again filled the streets with excited people and new trouble broke out.

14. In the regions untouched by agitators, Hindus and Muslims worked side by side in peace.

15. The indiscreetness of certain sections of the Press tended to keep communal feeling aroused.

Turning now to a consideration of these points we discover:<sup>1</sup>

(1) That over a considerable period of time<sup>2</sup> during the general strike and thereafter, certain attitudes or acquired patterns of behaviour were being built up in the minds of the Bombay mill workers, particularly a disregard for authority and the desirability of violence as a means of social coercion.

This result was accomplished for the most part by the technique of suggestion. Generally speaking, suggested behaviour is uncritical behaviour, as opposed to rational behaviour. By a series of public exhortations the strike leaders built up an attitude of disrespect for law and order—a general readiness for direct action which needed only the proper stimulus to set it off. This was accomplished largely through repetition:

*Meeting April 24, 1928.* The speaker “wanted one thousand volunteers who would not be afraid of death.”

*Meeting May 7, 1928.* “There was a time when the Czar ruled Russia but one day he was shot down on the road.”

*Meeting June 1, 1928.* “If a policeman comes in your chawl, assault him.”

*Meeting July 19, 1928.* “If the police are not with-

<sup>1</sup> Although in the following pages I have endeavoured to work out my own interpretation of the psychology of communal conflict, I must acknowledge my indebtedness to two books which have influenced my thinking in this field: Allport, Floyd Henry, *Social Psychology* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924), and Bernard, L. L., *An Introduction to Social Psychology* (Henry Holt & Co., 1926).

drawn within eight days, there will be rioting in Bombay City."

*Meeting July 22, 1928.* "A day will come when we will take to arms and fight . . . and drive away the Government."

*Meeting August 6, 1928.* "We shall bring about a revolution. We shall fight with you and crush you."

*Meeting August 8, 1928.* "If the police enter the chawls . . . do not hesitate to break their heads."

*Meeting August 15, 1928.* "Even though some of our men get killed, still we labourers shall make a revolution."

*Meeting September 20, 1928.* "The strikers will not rest in peace unless A [name mentioned] is wiped out of the world."<sup>1</sup>

The fact that the leaders were dealing almost entirely with illiterate masses of people, governed by emotions rather than reason, made the task of suggestion much easier, for the empty mind is much more open to suggestibility than the active mind. It is well known by the users of the technique of suggestion that it is the least intelligent who are the most susceptible, and it is their action which serves as the stimulus for the response of others. Overt action upon the part of one highly susceptible individual may be the stimulus which sets the whole crowd on fire, while the conflagration thus generated gains in intensity by the enthusiasm generated by inter-stimulation within the crowd.

The stage having been set by the building up of certain attitudes, all that remained to bring about the

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Bombay Riots Inquiry Committee*, pp. 41-42.

response of open conflict was the appearance of the releasing stimulus.

(2) The employment of Pathans as strike-breakers in the oil installations brought into play two powerful influences—the economic (hunger) motive and the sex motive. It is a well-known fact that one group of people will live harmoniously with another group of people of a varying religion, race, or colour if the second group is not an economic threat. Thus the Japanese had little trouble in California, or the Negroes in a northern city such as Chicago, until the Japanese and the Negroes came to be looked upon as competitors for jobs or as possible economic rivals. When this economic aspect came to be realized, both the Japanese and the Negro problems took a new turn—a turn from toleration to open hostility.

This same factor entered into the Bombay riots. The moment the Pathan became a strike-breaker he stood before the Hindu as an actual economic menace—a threat to the Hindu's employment, to his food, and to his shelter. From that instant toleration vanished and the Pathan was the enemy.

The sex motive in crowd behaviour is very closely allied to the economic motive. If my father, brother, or other relative is thrown out of employment, I am personally injured, and the man who takes my relative's place becomes my own personal enemy. Furthermore, if my friend or neighbour or their relatives are thrown out of work by the employment of a strike-breaker, I am inclined to put myself in their place. I become the defender of my family, my friends, or my community.

And the same feeling that motivates me, motivates the actions of others.

(3) When the strike leaders urged the strikers and their friends to take direct action against the Pathans, they were using the technique of direct suggestion. The attitude of many in the crowds was already hostile towards the Pathans. The attitude of hostility was intensified by repetition. Some susceptible person—probably of a low order of intelligence—committed the first assault, thereby providing the releasing stimulus for others. Others followed, and the conflict was on.

(4) The rallying of the Hindu mill workers to the support of the Hindu oil-strikers may be explained in terms of a sympathetic sex-interest, described in (2) above. It was a defence-reaction against threatened community interests.

(5) The rumours of kidnapping were typical of the kind of rumours that attend every mass disturbance. In this particular instance the rumour appears to have been given impetus by a newspaper. But since rumour is passed on from person to person by word of mouth, each person is free to garnish the reported incident as he sees fit. Because rumour circulates in this fashion it is almost impossible to trace it to its source or to verify its credibility. Rumour is particularly vicious because each individual passing on the rumour has the opportunity to attribute such acts to another as he would probably like to engage in himself. Because of its impersonality, rumour is a particularly effective way of arousing hatred. The outstanding modern example of the widespread use of

rumour as a means of stimulating hatred is of course the organized propaganda made use of in all countries during the World War.

(6) The fact that certain newspapers printed the kidnapping charges, elevated rumour to the status of truth in the minds of many. The man in the street has a tendency to ascribe unusual authority to that which he sees in print. If it is in the paper it must be true. The authority behind the reported item is seldom questioned.

(7) The unsuccessful attempt of the Commissioner of Police to allay suspicion by asking Government to deny the rumours of kidnapping, illustrates the futility of an intellectual appeal to meet a mass situation. An ignorant demagogue can make any number of false charges and arouse his hearers to a fighting pitch. A reasonable man may attempt a calm and logical refutation of these charges and fail completely. The mind of the crowd is not made up by reason, it is governed by emotions and prejudices. The group which the Commissioner of Police was endeavouring to quiet was the illiterate, irrational group. The mere issuing of a Government denial failed to strike fire. Facts alone make little appeal to an illiterate crowd. The facts must be tinged with emotion.

(8) Since in the first phase the motives for rioting were economic (hunger) and sex motives, the attention of the Hindus was centred upon seeking out and punishing the Pathans, who were symbolic of the strike-breakers. Thus for a time individual Pathans, who may be likened to the advance scouts of any army, bore the brunt of the attack. Next, groups of

Pathans—raiding parties, so to speak—came to the support of the outposts, and finally

(9) When the Muslims saw their fellow-Muslims (the Pathans) being hunted down and done to death, the full strength of the army was thrown into the contest. The reasoning was somewhat like this: "The Pathans are Muslims. An injury inflicted upon a Pathan is an injury inflicted upon the Muslims. Therefore all good Muslims must rally to avenge the Pathans," and at this point the riots became distinctly communal.

(10) On various occasions during the riots I watched large groups of people engaged in conflict. The cross-lanes became temporarily a milling mass of humanity. Sticks were flourished, a few knives were drawn, fists were used freely, and stones and bottles were hurled into the midst of the crowd from the outside edges. The people were temporarily mad—human beings reverting to the brute.

In a mob of this nature the inhibitions and controls of the individual are broken down, the process of interstimulation begins to operate, and under the stress of excitement the mob engages in excesses of which very few individuals in the mob would regard themselves capable.

The part played by imitation in mob action is sometimes misunderstood. The simple fact that I observe others fighting does not necessarily mean that I am led to enter into the fight. If I do take a hand, it may be because I am imitating the others, but it may also be because I am responding to the same stimulus as they in a manner similar to theirs. Mob behaviour is really the response of the individuals within the mob



to like stimuli, though, of course, the presence of others intensifies individual feeling. The individual who joins the mob is himself generally under the influence of the powerful emotions of anger or fear. Given this original preparation, the actions of others serve to raise the emotions of the individual to a much higher temperature.

As I have indicated already, the stimulus which releases mob fury is generally an overt act upon the part of some highly suggestible and irresponsible person. Others then join in, and by a process of social inter-stimulation—each individual reacting upon and being reacted upon by others—a most violent response is developed. The tragedy of the situation is that mob action, which issues in such disastrous consequences, can so easily be initiated by the least responsible members of the social group—the malicious, the bigoted, or the ignorant.

While a certain number of individual murderous attacks were both brutal and premeditated, others, undoubtedly, were the result of the intensified emotion developed within the mob. The individual within the mob was stimulated to the point of action. The group rioting only served to inflame him further and under this emotional stress he went forth as an individual fighter and murderer.

I have already cited the evidence of Hindu and Muslim working men to the effect that among certain classes of both Hindus and Muslims the communal murderer is held in respect and pointed out to the young men as a pattern worthy of emulation. It is, therefore, but natural that certain of the young men

in both communities should desire to copy the pattern in order that they themselves might attract attention. This is known in social psychology as "purposive imitation"—a conscious copying of the behaviour of another in order to win social approval. Even though the approval may come from a very small circle, at a certain stage in a young man's life the approval of his immediate friends means much more to him than the opinions of any outside group. The fact that a few of the murderer's close friends approve of his actions leads the murderer into the fallacy of "social projection," i.e. the plaudits of the few become for him a sure sign of the approval of the many, until in his own mind the murderer may even come to regard himself as a saviour of his community.

Looting is always an accompaniment of riots. For some, the purpose of looting is to secure food. I personally witnessed the looting of food shops by Pathans because they were hungry. Others, under the stimulus of crowd action, find themselves released from their previous inhibitions and restraints. In days previous to the riots they may have looked into shops and coveted certain of the articles there displayed, but the restraints of social approval and social disapproval effectively checked them from stealing. Within the rioting crowd, however, that which had been previously regarded with social disapproval came to be looked upon with social approval. The inhibition was removed and the individual felt perfectly free to take that which he desired. The ethics of the crowd man are an interesting study. A man engages in actions of which he would not have thought himself capable, because so many

other people are now doing these things. It boils down to the dictum, "Since so many in the crowd are doing this thing, it must be right."

But another important factor enters into the situation of looting. Whereas in the course of everyday conduct a person is socially stimulated by those with whom he comes into intimate contact, so that he responds by conversation, smiling, or getting angry as the case may be, there are also situations in which the stimulus is non-social, and yet it calls forth just as definite a response as the social stimulus. Consider, for example, the instance witnessed to by Dr. Nunan above, where a group of Pathans systematically smashed in the fronts of Hindu shops. These shops in themselves were non-social, and yet in the minds of the Pathans each Hindu shop-front was definitely associated with their grievances against the Hindus. Multiply such cases and you can see the reason not only for looting shops but also for attacking mosques and temples.

(11) A riot once started is hard to stop because the normal technique of social control is temporarily suspended. Once a man is freed from the usual forms of social control, he cannot at once be brought under control. This is particularly true if that individual is led to feel that by engaging in communal riots he is fighting for home and family. The appeal: "Protect your homes," is one of the most effective, and at the same time one of the most malicious weapons in the whole armoury of propaganda. And the popular orator well knows its power.

In those sections of the city in which either Hindus or Muslims are in the majority there are strong com-

muna' loyalties, if for no other reason than the simple one that the residents of these localities are in closer contact, with each other than they are with people living at a distance—or even at a social distance—that is, people who may be living in physical proximity, but separated by varying customs, languages, etc. The very number and the continuity of contacts within the distinctively Hindu or distinctively Muslim locality tend to arouse such feelings of sympathy and loyalty that those residing in the region are ready to respond to the stimulus "Protect Your Homes," in a highly emotional manner.

The leaders who raise this battle-cry may either be sincere—though ignorant or bigoted—or they may be seeking some personal or communal advantage. The motive appealed to is generally fear, and the suggested activity is generally destructive rather than constructive. The authority of the words of the leader generally increases in direct proportion to the size of the crowd, for individuals in the crowd, noting the assent given by other members of the crowd, tend to become convinced that the leader must be correct and by their positive response stimulate still others.

When the crowd of boys pours out of our Neighbourhood House at the end of the play hours, one boy will sometimes cut loose with a shrill whistle. Immediately the boy next to him also whistles. This stimulates the first boy to renewed effort and he whistles still louder. Another boy picks it up and by each boy stimulating others and himself being stimulated to renewed activity by the others, the volume of whistling increases until it is almost bedlam. This same type of thing happens

within the communal mob. A man, observing the favourable effect of his actions upon others, is stimulated to renewed activity and this in turn intensifies the response of the others until an extremely ugly situation has developed.

(12) Since a mob is controlled by its emotions rather than by intelligence, an agreement to make peace on the part of a few intellectuals would have little chance of finding ready acceptance by a mob, and in this case it did not.

(13) On the other hand, the so-called "peace-processions," by filling the streets with large crowds of excited people, simply provided the stimulus for another outburst of mob feeling, even more intense, because of the temporary effort to thwart it.

(14) The absence of agitation and of the use of the technique of suggestion in certain parts of the city where Hindus and Muslims continued to work side by side in a peaceful manner, demonstrates clearly the pernicious influence of the communal agitator.

(15) Just as the irresponsible demagogue can arouse the passions of a mob by playing upon their emotions, so the irresponsible Press can both stir up hatred and keep the feeling alive. Words, whether printed or spoken, have certain emotional associations and are able to evoke definite responses. The communal writer has the opportunity of reaching even a wider audience than the communal orator. By appealing to men's prejudices, to hatred and to fear, the newspaper is definitely conditioning its susceptible readers to respond more readily to the releasing stimulus and to engage in overt action. While the Press has every

right to present the news, it must also recognize its public responsibility, and should certainly endeavour to use its influence to assist in restoring confidence. The editorial supervision of the writings of excited and even partisan reporters should be unusually careful in times of communal conflict.

In a brief chapter such as this, it is, of course, impossible to examine all the factors entering into communal conflict. I have, however, endeavoured to throw a bit of light upon a specific situation. Since communalism at the present time is a subject which usually generates more heat than light, even this slight attempt at illumination should not be without its value.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

IN seeking for a solution to the communal problem in India, it is possible to point out five different methods of approach which have been used by nations, races, or classes in their dealings with one another. They are :

- (1) The method of subjection.
- (2) The method of conflict.
- (3) The method of segregation.
- (4) The method of *laissez-faire*.
- (5) The method of intelligent good-will.

*The method of subjection.*—From the beginnings of human history the strong have subdued the weak. Tribes have warred with tribes and nations have warred with nations. The conquerors have killed, destroyed, and plundered, and have either forced the conquered people into slavery or have imposed political and social disabilities upon them. Here and there a benevolent ruler has allowed his conquered subjects a measure of freedom, but even at the best the position of a subject people is a humiliating and inferior one. There is no equality; the line between the rulers and the ruled is clearly drawn.

During a considerable period of Indian history the Muslim invaders, as the ruling class, held large numbers of Hindus in subjection, forcing them either to submit to conversion or to pay the *jizyah*, or poll-tax. But in the present political organization of India it is impos-

sible for either Muslims or Hindus to attain to a position of absolute dominance. The solution of subjection, therefore, lies outside the realm of practical politics. In the future India, no community will rule another. Hindus may have a majority, in one province and Muslims in another, but neither community will be able to disregard the rights of the other. The principle of safeguards for minorities is already established as a fundamental of Indian political thought. The method of subjection may therefore be disregarded as a possible solution for the communal problem.

*The method of conflict* is equally unsatisfactory. It has been tried in India, and with what results? Communal riots here, communal riots there; thousands of lives lost, thousands more injured, and lakhs of rupees worth of property destroyed. It has created hatreds and antagonisms that will take long years to heal. It has poisoned village life, city life, and the life of the nation. It has hindered national progress—social, economic, and political. It has sapped the nation's vitality and given nothing constructive in return. It has demonstrated its futility to every intelligent man. As a heritage of an outworn past, it has no place in the future development of modern India.

*The method of segregation* has also been practised in India. The early Aryan invaders segregated rigidly the original inhabitants of the country. Hindus and Muslims have tried to separate themselves, to live in different areas and to keep to themselves as much as possible. But a nation is an organism and can only function in a healthy manner as its constituent parts function healthfully. India needs the united contri-



bution of both Hindus and Muslims. A man cannot live to himself alone and a community cannot live to itself alone. If the nation is to thrive there must be a mutual exchange of services, ideals, and ideas. Isolation has passed as an ideal for the nations, and isolation must pass as an ideal for groups within nations.

*The method of laissez-faire* or drift has many adherents. "Why try to interfere with the communal question? Leave things alone, and they will adjust themselves." But the difficulty is that things let alone do not take care of themselves. Instead of improving, they generally drift from bad to worse. While the better elements in society are keeping hands off, the irresponsible elements are fomenting trouble. Just as intelligent planning has been found to be necessary in the economic field, so also it is essential in the social field. The communal problem cannot be ignored, it must be faced.

The method which faces the communal problem squarely is *the method of intelligent good-will*, and I would stress both the words "intelligent" and "good-will." Intelligence alone will not solve the problem, nor is kindly feeling in itself adequate. But the determination to face the problem in a spirit of friendliness and to bring the highest intelligence to bear upon it gives promise of making real progress towards its solution.

We must recognize at the outset that the process of bringing about communal harmony will be a slow one. When but 28 millions out of a total population of 353 millions are literate, it is impossible to speak in terms of immediate advance. Old prejudices die hard and the process is particularly lingering and painful

among uneducated people. The man in the street wants benefits and privileges for himself. The popular communal leaders are the men who can "deliver the goods." To persuade men to look beyond their own selfish interests and to follow the higher ideal of a richer life for all will require a long process of education.

The idealist must be hopeful, but he dare not be too optimistic. It does no good to minimize the complexity of the communal problem. Men's ways of thinking can be changed, but the drag of the social heritage is tremendous. People who have thought in communal terms for generations are not apt to experience a sudden conversion. They are more likely to resist any attempts at change. But a resistance which seeks to hold back the tides of progress is bound to be futile. A new spirit is in the air. Men are feeling the thrill of nationalism, and once the business of nation-building is taken seriously, narrow communalism must inevitably recede into the background.

Disdaining that easy optimism which would ignore the communal problem, we still have ample grounds for hope, for after all, when the problem is traced through, we find the key to its solution in the individual. Hindus and Muslims do not oppose each other in the abstract. The Hindus are the individual Hindus making up the Hindu community and the Muslims are the individual Muslims making up the Muslim community. That which appears impossible when viewed as an abstract group problem, becomes more possible when viewed in the light of individuals—our own Hindu and Muslim associates, our fellow-workers, and potential friends.

It is also well to bear in mind that it is not communalism itself which we are seeking to eradicate, but a narrow, selfish communalism. The Muslim group and the Hindu group do have a different tradition and culture. We would not wish either group to disparage its heritage. The Muslim should be proud that he is a Muslim, and the Hindu should be proud that he is a Hindu. But that pride should not be so inordinate as to blind each group to the good in the other. Differences need not of necessity be divisive, they may also be a means of enrichment. Just as Hinduism as a religion has gloried in its diversity, so India as a whole should glory in the many and varied elements which contribute to its splendour. A wholesale communalism is a distinct gain to India, but a narrow communalism is as the breath of death.

In the early days of my own country, the United States of America, each state or colony was extremely jealous of its own interests. They thought in terms of Virginia, of Maryland, of Massachusetts—but not in terms of America. But before many decades had passed it became abundantly clear that if the new land was to flourish, the interests of the individual colonies must be subordinated to the interests of a united nation, in which each group would work for the interests of all. And that same transition must take place in India. The competitive interests which are dividing Hindus and Muslims must be subordinated to a common purpose—the welfare of India—for it is only thus that India can rise to the full stature of her nationhood.

The first step towards a solution of the communal problem is an open mind—a willingness to see the good

in others. The man with a closed mind is a distinct social liability. Every man of intelligence must ask himself the question : "What is my own attitude towards this problem? Am I willing to face it on its merits or am I afraid of the opinions of my group?" Every great social movement in the course of history has had its origin in the hearts and minds of individuals. A person here and a person there; a voice here and a voice there; and a mighty movement has sprung into being through the sheer contagion of personality. And that which has been done can be done again. As individual members of one community demonstrate themselves to be friendly towards and scrupulously fair-minded in their dealings with individual members of another community, their example will spread and a movement of good-will will be launched, the results of which will be lasting.

To those who say that Hindus and Muslims have always fought and that therefore they will always continue to fight, we can point out that human nature does change. True, a man's biological heritage is more or less fixed, but his opinions, ideas, and prejudices are the result of his social heritage. A child is born into the world with certain tendencies to action. He responds to his social environment and in the course of time comes to build up definite habits of thought and behaviour. These habits are shaped almost entirely by the social group in which the individual finds himself. If the outlook of the group is narrow, the chances are that the outlook of the individual will be narrow. If the outlook of the group is communal, the chances are that the outlook of the individual will

be communal. One of the major reasons for communal conflict is the restricted outlook of the communal group.

A narrow communalism encourages men to look in rather than out. The attention of the bigoted religionist is centred in a large measure upon the carrying out of religious practices which have been handed down from the past, and upon continuing the customs and traditions of a past generation. Such a communalism inculcates loyalty to attitudes and ideals which are highly emotionalized, but which are almost entirely lacking in intellectual content. It finds its behaviour patterns within the limits of its own group. In other words, the narrow communalist attempts to operate within too limited an area of experience. He fails to take account of the creative and pulsating forces outside of his own community. He needs to widen his horizon until those attitudes of love, loyalty, and devotion which characterize his family and communal life are expanded to the point where they also become a factor in inter-communal and wider relationships.

Since for the narrow communalist religion is concrete and highly emotional, he poses as the defender of his religion and resents any criticism of it. But when religion becomes more intellectualized, less attention is paid to defending the old beliefs and more attention is given to the practical application of religion to the common welfare. In the modern world, both the narrower personal attitudes and religious conceptions must be expanded until they become constructive forces in the wider social life.

To take one simple, practical example. Much of the communal trouble in India is due to interference with

ceremonial and ritual, e.g., music before mosques and Hindu resentment at Muslim cow-killing. The reason for this is that among both the Hindu and Muslim masses religion is in large degree a matter of rites and ceremonies. But as religion becomes more intellectualized, the emphasis upon rites and ceremonies is minimized and they become of less and less importance. It is therefore clear that as religion passes from the concrete and emotional into the realm of the more abstract and intellectual ideals, that communal tension inspired by religion will correspondingly lessen.

I have already indicated the indifference of educated youth to the religious bickerings of their fathers. In my daily dealings with young men of all religions I find a general impatience with the old emphasis upon religious formalism. The youth of to-day are looking for a religion which unites instead of divides. It is safe to predict that with the increase of education, communal troubles having their origin in religious differences will become increasingly less.

Superstitions and half-truths must be replaced by exact knowledge. As has already been pointed out, communal discord is nourished by rumour, a biased teaching of history, and by malicious propaganda. Among both Hindus and Muslims there are countless sincere people whose whole mental outlook towards the members of the other group has been distorted by inexactitudes and wilful lies. The only way to change the attitudes of these people is by the difficult method of disseminating truth. Our schools must not only present knowledge, but also train their students in the

art of thinking, that they may be able to discriminate. Adult education agencies have not only an opportunity but a definite responsibility in this direction.

Whereas communal conflict is often stirred up by irresponsible leaders playing upon the emotions of the crowd in such a way as to advance their own purposes, communal unity must be furthered through the formation of rational groups—small discussion groups and larger deliberative assemblies, gathered together for the purpose of facing facts and acting in accordance with the dictates of reason. The urgent need is for more men who refuse to be stampeded by appeals to the primary emotions of hatred and fear, but who are able habitually to transfer their behaviour from the overt act to the inner processes of thought, and to arrive at their own decisions. Such a transformation is necessarily slow, but what a field for adult education!

As Mr. Jayakar well pointed out in a lecture upon the communal problem at the Nagpada Neighbourhood House, attempts should be made to cope with this problem in a scientific fashion. "Representatives from all the varying communities in Bombay should form a society to study this problem—to analyse causes, and to suggest what remedies can best be applied at particular times. . . . In America, citizens of all classes meet together to discuss common sanitary problems, to lay plans for making the city beautiful, and for improving the general level of life. The secret of the success of these organizations is that they deal with common problems, and through dealing with common problems other problems are made common. Common interests are created where they do not exist.

"Planting trees, providing open spaces, and the like are not very controversial problems, but the friendships gained through these activities are a powerful solvent of matters of controversy. If we could carry out activities of this kind in India, it would be a very splendid thing indeed. . . . Communal harmony will not come until a man realizes that his own interests are the interests of his brother."

At the present time far too much of our created public opinion is sectional public opinion, that is, public opinion created by the organized propaganda of partisan groups. The adoption of Mr. Jayakar's suggestion that men of all groups should sit together in friendly conference for a scientific study of the communal problem would be of real help in creating a public opinion in the interests of the social whole, rather than any particular section of it. The publicized findings of such groups would supply a much needed corrective to the prejudiced rantings of the hyper-communal Press.

The economic aspects of communalism were discussed briefly in chapter iv. Men must eat, and when jobs are at a premium they do not hesitate to use every available influence to secure employment. The communal leader, like the machine politician in my own country, is probably rated by what he actually "does" for his followers. The communal organization, like the political machine, has as one of its major purposes the securing of posts for its own members. There is sure to be bitterness in the economic field as long as posts are filled upon communal lines. But the day is certain to come when the demands of efficiency will strike a



telling blow at the easy-going administration of much of present-day Indian industry. Competition will compel even communally minded employers to seek out the best available men for their particular situation. When the principle of the "best man for the job" is placed alongside the prevalent principle of "my community first," the exigency of the industrial situation itself will necessitate the adoption of the former.

The communal struggle for posts will continue longer in politics than in commerce. The business man will not long allow sentiment to stand in the way of profits. Governments, on the other hand, must at times place expediency before efficiency. Since communal patronage is expedient, there is little sign of immediate relief upon the political horizon. In fact, it is the political situation which is militating against the improvement of communal relationships in other directions.

Though the communal solution to the political problem now holds the field, the national solution must be held up as the future goal. It is extremely difficult to see how parliamentary institutions can operate in any adequate manner when founded upon separate communal electorates. As the Prime Minister pointed out in a speech before the House of Commons: "If every constituency is to be ear-marked as to community or interest there will be no room left for the growth of what we consider to be purely political organizations which would comprehend all communities, all creeds, all classes, all conditions of faith. This is one of the problems which has to be faced, because, if India is going to develop a robust political life, there must be room for national political parties

based upon conceptions of India's interest, and not upon conceptions regarding the well-being of any field that is smaller or less comprehensive than the whole of India."

It is imperative for the welfare of India that both communities should approach the problem in a spirit of give and take and arrive at an *agreed* solution. The minority problem is not peculiar to India. It exists in Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Poland, and the Balkan States—to mention but a few of the countries which are wrestling with this difficulty. Certainly the keen political minds of India can devise some other means for the protection of minorities than the communal electorate. •

The outstanding need in India is for political parties which will appeal for the support of the people upon the basis of merit, instead of upon the basis of religious prejudices. Parliaments of Religion have their place, but legislatures should be political bodies. The Catholics in the United States and Great Britain have strong religious sentiments, but when it comes to political affairs they think in terms of politics. As long as politics are on a communal basis there is very little hope for alternate Governments which come into being or fall upon national issues. Under the present arrangement the Muslims are practically doomed to remain a political minority and to accept such favours as they can secure. The party system is working at the present time in the Presidency of Madras, where the Justice Party and the Congress are already strengthening their political fences in anticipation of the new constitution. And in Madras communal trouble is much less prevalent than in other sections of India. An extension

of the Madras Party System would go far towards clearing the atmosphere in other parts of India.

As every mountain climber knows, each height attained through strain and effort discloses still new heights. India to-day is toilfully ascending her political mountain. She has gone far, but new heights still lie ahead. Whether she will gain the summit depends upon the courage and vision of her own leadership.

At any rate, the future beckons.

